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MASTER VIRGIL

THE AUTHOR OF THE ÆNEID AS HE SEEMED IN THE MIDDLE AGES

A SERIES OF STUDIES

BY

J. S. TUNISON

Magicas invitam accingier artis

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Testor, cara, deos et te, germana, tuumque
Dulce caput, magicas invitam accingier artis.

The arrangement of the citations in this book was a matter of some study for the author. As first written out, the notes were so frequent that almost every sentence in the text was ornamented with marks indicating quotations or references at the bottom of the page. Nothing could be more burdensome than this mass of indigestible fragments succeeding each other in an order dependent on the text, but not easily held in the memory. As the only originality possible to a work of this kind pertained to method, arrangement and form of expression, it was finally decided to group the references with the sections of the table of contents, disregarding some punctilios of authorship, but relieving the eye from a fatiguing task, and still leaving it in the power of the zealous reader to trace all the sources from which the author drew his information. If some man of approved learning had taken up this task; if Thomas Wright, for example, had carried out his own suggestions made in the preface to his Alexander Neckam, he would have saved me trouble and gained my applause. The references are in most cases to books of value, in some to the mere curiosities of literature and in others to volumes which have only the value, fixed but trivial, of specimens in a museum. Whether or not proper discrimination has been made in the text between books of authority and books of no authority, the reader can easily determine.

SYLLABUS.

I. An Apology: How these essays came to be written; the lines of study that were followed; the proposed synthesis of the legends respecting Virgil; the application of these tales to the name of Virgil due to a literary rather than a popular inspiration; the taste of the middle ages for narratives concerning magicians; acquaintance of the people in the middle ages with the writings of classic times; political movements that were favorable to the creation of a magical renown for Virgil; the growth of superstition as shown in the literature of the period between the beginning of the twelfth and the close of the sixteenth century; the problem that is sought to be solved in this book. pp. 1-9.

II. Virgil and the Devil: Diabolism at first carefully excluded from the miraculous stories about Virgil; the wonders done by Virgil, as accounted for by Alexander Neckam, by Gervase of Tilbury, by Conrad of Querfurt, by the author of the *Dolopathos*, by the French and German romancers; Virgil's personality, as viewed by his contemporaries, tinged with a suggestion of mystery; stimulus to legend-making given by the notions entertained respecting poetry; the way thus made to a phase of demonism; no necessity for the introduction of Arabian fancies to account for the devil as presented in the Virgilian tales; modification in the classical theory of magic, which at last

rendered demons indispensable in all tales of necromancy; the opinions of Pliny, of Apuleius and of mediæval writers, interpreted by the mediæval Germans particularly, to mean demonism; the character of the devil, as connected with Virgil, a manifest creation of the German fancy; Virgil in this aspect a predecessor of Faust; examples of the tales in which Virgil figured with the devil; traces shown of an extremely early communication with the Far East, probably by way of Venice; the development of the diabolism in the legends of Virgil, so far as it is of any value, held to indicate that the craze on this subject grew in terror and intensity, so that what was a comparatively harmless belief in the twelfth century became a cruel and deadly fanaticism in the turbulent era of the Reformation; its outcome in the Faust legends. pp. 10-38.

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III. VIRGIL IN LITERARY TRADITION: Veneration felt for Virgil among the Romans; the use of his works as models of Latin style by the grammarians and rhetoricians; debased views of Virgil in post-classic times, showing a legendary tendency; superstitious use of Virgil's writing in divination; the legendary movement of the Virgilian tradition in the fourth and fifth

centuries, compared to modern tendencies involving the names of Shakespeare and Goethe; views of mediæval Latin poets concerning Virgil; expression of political and theological opinion respecting the works of Virgil; the idea of Virgil portrayed in the romance literature; the legendary tendency shown in the succession of purely literary anecdote. pp. 39-63.

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Stories, p. 115; Douce, *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, pp. 172-178; The English *Gesta Romanorum*, Chap. XLVIII.

VI. VIRGIL THE SAVIOUR OF ROME: The Pagan and early Christian conception of idols as nothing less than the habitation of living beings of an order superior to man; the utility of this notion in accounting for the political sagacity and power of the Romans; suggestions of the possible course by which the tale of the *Salvatio Romæ* might have been transmitted from early times to the authors who first put it in writing; probable relations of the British and Saxons; how Virgil came to be the hero in this tale; successive forms of the narrative; application of the legend to places in Rome. pp. 113-133.

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VII. VIRGIL THE LOVER: Humorous aspect of the magician's character; mediæval contempt for woman; her reputation for cunning and duplicity; Virgil and the basket; varied forms of this legend colored with diabolism; other tales in which Virgil figured with women; the Virgil of Spanish romance. pp. 134-155.

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IX. VIRGIL IN LATER LITERATURE; Brief popularity of the tales in Italy; the narrations of the early English poets; the conception of Virgil entertained at the renaissance and subsequent to that time; Warburton's interpretation of the Sixth Æneid; contemporary views taken of his works; Addison's theory

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FIRST—AN APOLOGY

I

Some reason exists for presuming that an apology is necessary from one who seeks to draw out of their mediæval obscurity the magical legends concerning the poet Virgil. It will, therefore, not be out of place to say that the studies which led to the series of essays printed in this book were undertaken solely for the information of the writer. He supposed, at the outset, that he was one of the few among men of letters who lacked knowledge on this head; and that he could obtain at second hand from authors in English, or from easily accessible works of the middle ages, all that he sought—a complete and succinct analysis of the legends in their relation to Virgil as a poet and as a man. This supposition was the offspring of ignorance which was, perhaps, inexcusable. It had been the design of the writer to limit his mediæval studies to a well-defined field which had been outlined, and, as he had good reason to know after much labor, was not frequently traversed by scholars of the present day. Many details in this narrow field had been mastered. It was not a welcome fact to learn that the legends of Virgil, and potentially the relation of Virgil's poetry to the literary and social life of the middle ages, were among the details yet

to be worked out. For it did not require many days to discover that writers in English were not among the number of those who had discussed this subject with any fullness or clearness. There were allusions, more or less valuable to the subject, in a great many books by English and American authors; there were important versions of some legends in the early poetry, and, thanks to William J. Thoms's *Early English Prose Romances* and Thomas Wright's *Sorcery and Magic*, one could easily make the acquaintance of John Doesborcke's *Virgilius*. The remarks on the subject in Hazlitt's Warton's *History of English Poetry* were useful, and so were some things in Ticknor's *History of Spanish Literature*. This was the best that could be done in English. But it was not difficult to get John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus* and Wright's edition of Alexander Neckam. The portions of Gervase of Tilbury and Conrad of Querfurt that related to the topic were to be picked up piece-meal in various books, even though one had neither the *Scriptores rerum Brunsvicensium*, nor Professor Liebrecht's work on Gervase, and the romance of *Dolopathos*, as published by Brunet and Montaiglon, though an exceedingly uncommon little book in the United States, was to be had from Paris. If one had nothing else, he could with these documents form a satisfactory opinion upon the origin and growth of the legends.

Of course, it was not long before the title of Professor Domenico Comparetti's book, *Virgilio nel Medio Evo* was stumbled upon. Having obtained that work, the writer found that some of his previous labor might have been saved, and taking it along with Zappert's *Virgil's Leben und Fortleben im Mittelalter*, that he had obtained a complete index to the literature of the subject. The German translation of

Comparetti is of less value than the original because it lacks the numerous versions of the tales concerning Virgil which form nearly half the second volume of the Italian work. The present writer had not the requisite facility in Italian to make a successful translation of Comparetti, even though desirous of doing it. But in reading the book, the conclusion was forced upon him that Signor Comparetti had overdrawn the indebtedness of the literature of the twelfth century to Neapolitan folk-lore. Absorbed in this thesis respecting the origin of the Virgilian legends, he had obscured the fact that the first indication of a knowledge of these tales in any part of Europe was given in the writings of a man (Neckam) who, there is every reason to suppose, never was in Italy. He only incidentally touched upon what seemed a vital point—namely, that, whether by design or otherwise, the various phases of the legends corresponded respectively to the diverse phases of Virgil's personality and learning as reflected in classical and post-classical criticism. While, therefore, his work is so complete in point of subject matter that no man could hope, even though he were at the sources of mediæval learning, to add citations of great value to it, there is an aspect of the theme which he did not pause to examine. He thus left room for a work in which the personality of Virgil, his influence on the middle ages and the mediæval conception of his writings should be viewed in that close relationship in which they really subsisted.

II

The writer of the essays which follow, while he disclaims all pretensions to learning or to a scientific method in the treatment of this subject, maintains, nevertheless, that he has

the right which comes of care and patience to urge a somewhat novel synthesis of the Virgilian superstitions upon the attention of the reader. The essays have been rewritten more than once—not in the hope of literary excellence, but with the purpose of classifying every important element in the legends. No hypothesis would serve to account for the existence of any compact body of fiction, unless it were itself compact, uniform, concentric, and it would not be satisfactory if it failed to account for every legendary fragment in its proper place. The theory that these legends originated in a growth of Neapolitan folk-lore is notably defective as a means of explaining some of the most important circumstances in which the legends became known to the public of Europe. It is adverse to the fact that Italian writers were the last in the republic of letters to recognize the magical reputation attributed to Virgil. It is equally adverse to the fact that the first writers who related tales of Virgilian magic were Norman Latinists of England and France. It can be made to cover only that portion of the tales which confessedly relates to Naples. That the anecdotes of magical or prophetic power which were applied to Virgil were, apart from his name, matters of universal belief throughout Europe, and Asia, too, and were told without discrimination of any person who gained a repute for learning, is a fact which no longer needs proof. Such tales were as often told in Britain and in Scandinavia as they were in Italy. They were as agreeable to the common taste in Teheran as in Constantinople, and as familiar in classic times as they are to-day. Granting this element of popularity, it is unnecessary to presume that the populace were ever anything but followers in the adaptation of magical fables to the fame of Virgil. In other words, the facts point

to a literary rather than a popular genesis for the special fiction in which the name of Virgil figures. That no vestiges of the legends remain in the popular lore of Naples to-day is the complement of the fact that they never had any vital relation to the people of that city. Every circumstance is such as to show that the evanescent and late celebrity which they had in Southern Italy was evoked by travelers and by foreign writings, read and to some extent imitated by Italian authors. The materials were in no sense the peculiar property of the Apulian peasantry. It was the craze among men of letters and science in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to attribute a magical efficacy to learning and a magical character to genius. Magic was considered, as the development theory is to-day, a working hypothesis to account for things otherwise unaccountable. Men with more imagination than discreetness, in the illustration of an opinion which was supposed to be scientifically demonstrable, did not scruple to use fiction, nor to invent it themselves, when they deemed it advisable to do so. They might easily have explained that they were merely applying an accepted generalization to a hypothetical case. One author only is to be found who attributed to Virgil proficiency in alchemy. It is manifest that this author consulted his imagination for his facts. When Gervase boasted that he experimented successfully with a book of the *ars notoria*, he became a liar by his own confession. In truth, it will be apparent to any one who studies the magical narratives of mediæval times that they owe their existence in a greater number of cases to a disposition in writers and readers favorable to a specific mode of romance writing. A certain kind of incident was credible, when related of a sorcerer. The romances which included this species of incident were

popular. Therefore, the romances were written, regardless of facts, and even in defiance of facts that were generally known, as in the case of Virgil.

III

It is presumed that the reader knows the middle ages not to have been the times of ignorance described by the common run of writers since the so-called revival of learning. If he does not know this he will need to be told that considered as literature, and not as a mere philological stalking horse, the poems of Virgil were widely read and as well understood in the twelfth century as they are to-day. These poems had a bearing on the life of the people at that time which the people now can not feel. Virgilian phrases and verses illustrated that life so well as to make it possible for a wide-ranging German scholar to gather out of the Teutonic epics of the middle ages passages formed closely upon the Virgilian model both in the manner and meaning, which describe the life of the feudal warrior from the ambitious dream time of youth to the echoes of the eulogy at the grave of the scarred and grizzled hero. The name of a poet so well known was convenient for the use of the romancers. Anecdotes about Virgil would be heard with pleasure, and there would be no need of the explanatory preamble which would be indispensable in the case of names less famous. The conquest of Sicily by the Normans had given an impetus to the curiosity of Northern France and England concerning the antiquities of that island and of the neighboring mainland. Undoubtedly travelers, returning from the Mediterranean, had many tales to tell in which important names were brought into novel relation with places and incidents with which, in an accurate

narrative, they could have had nothing to do. It was this influence that led to the composition of at least one elaborate tale in which Virgil and the Emperor of Rome were made to figure in the affairs of Sicily. To the Northern mind the ancient lands of the Mediterranean were full of sorcery and mystery. Sicily had been from the earliest times the abode of magic, the home of the mysteries of Ceres and Proserpine. The Norman Latinists fell in with the new tendency, correcting it somewhat in the matter of geography, and were followed in time by the French and German romancers. The Italian and English vernacular writers of a still later age found the tales of use, but repeated them far more sparingly than the French and Germans had done. By this process of gradual dissemination it came about that every collection of tales or anecdotes in which it was possible to put these legends was ornamented with one or more of them. New tales were invented or appropriated. Objects were found at Rome and Naples and named to suit the narrative.

Thus, when the fashion arose in the sixteenth century of writing prose romances upon the lives of magicians, the materials were as readily to be found in the case of Virgil, as in that of Faust or Friar Bacon. The difference was that the story of Faust had its roots in national character. It was a natural growth, while the legends of Virgil were artificially attached to a personality which, however it may have been obscured and exaggerated or belittled, never lost its historic place. The fame of Faust gradually overshadowed that of all other magicians. While the latter have fallen one by one into the hands of the antiquary, the former has taken on a new life and a new character with each succeeding age. His magic wand reveals to the modern world how closely it is allied to

the mediæval past. His features in the wonderful portrayal of Goethe we find to be our own. He is the ideal embodiment of that spirit which would sacrifice every traditional belief, even faith itself, in the desire to know all things. His arrogance is our arrogance; his ambition is our ambition; his weakness our weakness, and his fall the figure of that ruin which may overtake our modern civilization. One of the primary reasons for interest in the legends of Virgil is that they lie historically at the basis of the Faust legends. In the awkward groping of the Teutonic race in the thirteenth century after an ideal, it is remarkable to observe how, having seized upon the Virgilian superstition, it invested the tales at once with that defiant demonism which is the central characteristic of Faust.

In such an atmosphere and under such influences as have been indicated, the fame of Virgil took on the legendary color which it retained down to the middle of the sixteenth century. Believing this color to be, in its first laying on, not a matter of popular impression so much as of literary design, the writer of these essays purposed to show in them the relation between the phases of Virgil's character, as it appears to his contemporaries and early critics, and the various legends. If he has succeeded in classifying all the important variations of the legends under the respective heads into which the account of Virgil's life may properly be divided, the inference is just that the magical repute is the creation of a conscious purpose, and not the offspring of the imaginative instinct in which folk-lore originates. Chronologically the essays are parallel rather than consecutive. The effort is made to trace the diabolism, the wonder working, the allegorizing and the prophetic power attributed to Virgil, from their beginnings

to their outcome in the fables prevalent at the close of the mediæval epoch. However imperfectly the principle which inspired the effort has been illustrated, it is one which affords a new view of the idea of Virgil cherished in the times of romance.

SECOND—VIRGIL AND THE DEVIL

I

Some ten or fifteen years before the close of the twelfth century there appeared in the most notable treatise of the time a paragraph which presented the Roman poet Virgil not only in the guise of a mechanical inventor, but also in a guise which to later ages seemed that of a magician. The occasion which Alexander Neckam, the foster brother of Richard I. of England, in his work upon the nature of things, seized as affording a pretext for relating a series of improbable anecdotes was an argument in behalf of schools and education. In addition to other examples of men who had been useful to the world, because of their studies, he cited that of Virgil. It was learning which enabled Virgil to relieve the city of Naples from a pest of leeches which infested the water, and this he did by placing a golden leech in one of the wells. The virtue of this image was shown many years afterward; for when it was taken out with the settlings of the well, an infinite army of leeches again plagued the city. In order to aid the dealers in fresh meat, who found it impossible to keep their wares untainted any length of time, Virgil constructed shambles, using the virtues of some unknown herbs by which flesh could be kept clean and wholesome, even for a period of

five hundred years. Learning it was that enabled this renowned poet to surround his garden with an immovable atmosphere, and to construct a bridge of air, by the use of which he was carried to any place he wished. At Rome, likewise, he built a noble palace in which every country known was represented by a wooden image, holding in its hand a bell. Whenever the people of any country ventured to plot treason against the majesty of the Roman Empire, the image of the traitorous nation began at once to ring its bell. Then a knight of bronze, seated on a horse of bronze at the summit of the palace, brandished his spear and pointed in the direction of the region where rebellion had broken out. The poet once, when asked how long this noble edifice would be preserved by the gods, replied: "It will stand until a virgin shall bear a son." Those who heard him applauded his words, and replied: "Then it will stand forever." But at the nativity of the Saviour, it is said, the building suddenly fell into a heap of ruins. In these few lines Neckam put not only the outline of the achievements attributed to the art of Virgil, but indicated his reputation as a prophet who foresaw the coming of Christ. These were the important features in the development of the legend from first to last. A story respecting a bronze fly, told by John of Salisbury in his *Polycraticus* shows that a portion of what Neckam related might have been known early in the latter half of the twelfth century. Neckam's manner of presenting the subject indicates that he presumed on the previous knowledge of his readers. The history of the literature relating to the subject of Virgilian magic from this point is not difficult to trace. Near the time of Neckam, Helinand, a Flemish trouvere, turned monk, gathered up the magical tales

which he had heard or invented concerning Virgil, and included them, with many other tales of the like character, in a pretended chronicle of the world. Some years later Gervase of Tilbury, a man who traveled much, but who was of narrow and credulous mind, devoid of a regard for facts, and incapable of accurately testing his own experiences, included some variations of the Virgilian tales in a work which he wrote to amuse the leisure of the Emperor Otto IV. What Neckam had vaguely spoken of under the general phrase of learning, Gervase described as mathematic art. Conrad of Querfurt, a German writer near the time of Gervase, used the words magic arts to describe Virgil's supposed power.

In the meanwhile a work, the indirect result of the conquest of Sicily by the Normans, had appeared about the beginning of the thirteenth century, which was apparently widely read. The romance of *Dolopathos*, while it was in outline only a variation of the tale of the King and his Seven Counselors, was widely different from that oriental fiction in its details, and particularly in the fact that Virgil as a sage, as an astronomer and as a necromancer was made the central figure in the narrative, which was one of great length and of much descriptive power. The outward semblance of Virgil, the necromancer, was so graphically portrayed in this work that subsequent romancers copied the picture without change. When the German verse makers, imitating models which they found in the French, took up the Virgilian legends, they interpreted the doubtful phrases about astronomy, and learning, and the seven arts to mean that Virgil had come by his exceptional skill as a mechanic, a sculptor and an architect through collusion with demons.

II

But in Neckam and in the *Dolopathos*, with all the fantastic additions to his fame, Virgil still retained his reputation as a poet. The phrase of Neckam, *vates gloriosus*, is enough of itself to disprove the notion once popular in respect to these legends —namely, that they originated in the superstitious veneration felt for one of the numerous mediæval Virgils with whom the author of the Æneid has been confounded. True, it is not easy for a modern reader to conceive how such incredible tales could have been associated with the name of Virgil. We do not know many facts concerning him, but these furnish the outline of the studious, contemplative life which he must have led in the composition of his poems. The biography of a recluse rarely furnishes more even to the most persistent curiosity. To know that the poet was the son of a humble, but well-to-do provincial; that he was liberally educated; that he inherited a small farm near Mantua; that he, along with his countrymen in Transpadane Gaul, suffered severely from the confiscations which followed the battle of Philippi; that he was the cherished friend of Horace and Mæcenas; that he was enriched by Octavian's kindness; was even in his lifetime accounted the greatest poet of the Roman world; that he lived in studious retirement at Rome, and especially at Naples; traveled late in life to Athens, died from a sunstroke at Brundisium on his return to Italy, and was buried near Naples; that he was tall in person and dark in appearance, melancholy, yet kindly in his disposition, pure in morals and modest even to rusticity in his demeanor—to know these things is, perhaps, to know all that was important in the poet's history. The witticism attributed to Octavian, that when

seated between his two friends, Maro and Horace, he was between sighs and tears, lets us into a knowledge of the chronic asthmatic complaint to which Virgil was subject. The poems of Horace evince the kindness and lovableness of his friend. If there is a lack of important details in the biography it is due to a want of incident in Virgil's career, and to what may be called a lack of variety and color in his outward seeming. He is rarely represented to us by his early biographer except in company with his books. His own poems he read, we are informed, with exquisite modulation and emphasis. Sometimes, in the enthusiasm of such a reading, he thought of felicitous phrases to complete verses which he had found impossible to finish in his closet. Tradition points out two lines as having been perfected in this manner. He had written "Misenum Æolidem," and in pronouncing these two words, it suddenly occurred to him to add "Quo non præstantior alter;" and so with the other verse:

Aere ciere viros—Martemque accendere cantu.

The contrast between his character and that of Horace was as lively as their friendship. Both were scholars; but the one was essentially a man of the world, the other a man of books. Horace was a man whom everybody could approach, and whom all were delighted to know. His wit charmed every circle. He was gifted with that genial sympathy which unlocks every heart. The passions of the high-born youth, the humors of the street, the scurrility of the vaporing rustics on the road to Brundisium were all alike interesting to him. But Virgil was such an one as only his most intimate friends could approach. To the people of the cities which he frequented, his tall figure and shambling gait were better known than he could have wished; for even the respectful plaudits of the multitude

confused him, and the cry, "There goes Virgil," drove him instantly to seek shelter in the nearest house until the inquisitive crowd dispersed. His relations with Octavian would have been sufficient to make his figure well known to the populace of Rome. The story of the enthusiasm with which the audience in a theater recognized his verses, rising to salute the author in the manner usually reserved for Octavian alone, indicates, also, that, while his appearance was familiar, he was treated with reverential homage. No doubt the universal impression of the ancient world respecting poetry had something to do with the early superstitions respecting Virgil. In his lifetime, and for a long subsequent period, men great in literature were separated from the people by the very same lines as the men of high birth. Genius was no sooner recognized than it was admitted to the imperial circle. This elevation to the highest rank without previous advantages of birth or fortune, with no preliminary course in arms or politics, served to heighten the mystery of the literary art in the eyes of the ungifted multitude. There must have been, the people well might think, some foreshadowing of such strange events. If the ruler, himself a divinity, chose such men for his nearest friends, he must have been guided by some supernatural power. A deity presided surely when these favorites of fortune were brought into the world. So, if we would understand how superstition could envelop Virgil's name in a cloud of mystery we must contemplate him in his personality and in his works, and we must form an estimate of the influence of these upon the people of Virgil's time and of subsequent times. It is difficult to imagine that an easy-going man of the world like Horace should become the subject of a myth. Nevertheless, such a myth arose. How much greater the opportunity was in the case of

Virgil for weird fancies can easily be understood. Germs of a legend were latent in the conception formed of him by his contemporaries. They attributed to him, for example, an extraordinary knowledge of Roman priestcraft. By the natural mutation of words under the influence of a new religion, this came to mean that he was versed in demonology. The revolution in literature and science led to changes in the signification of important descriptive words. What was thought in Virgil's time to be the true and praiseworthy science of divination was looked upon in the middle ages as a part of magic not less diabolical than the other departments of that black science. In the present age divination is considered the mere pretense and trickery of mountebanks. Suppose that Virgil had done for himself what was done by others in his behalf—that is, had laid claim to an intimate acquaintance with astrology; such an assertion in modern times would be sufficient to fix upon him the character of a quack. In the middle ages, on the contrary, it would have increased his reputation as a magician. These words are in themselves the same, the thread of their history is continuous, but it is not all of one color.

Thus a whole romance, an entire web of legend may be woven—indeed, has been woven—out of the potentialities of a single word. In view of this fact, that must be deemed a very shallow hypothesis which looked upon the romance writing and legend building of Europe as the result of contact with the Arabians. While acknowledging the oriental element in tales about Virgil, as well as in most other necromantic tales, we may safely maintain that this element had been at work through devious and now unknown channels from the earliest times. The European was once an oriental, and the last things

he is likely to forget are the superstitions of his ancient home. There is, indeed, a striking similarity between the literary and even the religious history of the Arabians and that of mediæval Europe. The tendency of both Europeans and Asiatics to wars for the dissemination of their respective creeds was shown at what may roughly be called the same epoch. On both sides were displayed at the same time the fanaticism, asceticism, blind devotion, credulity and alleged miraculous powers, characteristic of a zeal not tempered with knowledge. The classical age of Arabian literature was an age of paganism, and the same was true of Europe. Causes similar to those which barbarized the Latin, also corrupted the ancient purity of the Arabic language. While mediæval Europe was at work finding new uses for the fragments of ancient art and learning that had descended to it, mediæval Arabians were employed largely with the same material, drawn ultimately from the same sources. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if the results of the literary development of these long separated and conflicting races should have been at many points almost identical. When the imagination of the Arabians was absorbed in the attractions of Greek, Indian and Persian tales, transforming them into romances of which Cairo, Bagdad or Damascus were the legendary centres, the fancy of the European races was equally active, but it naturally transferred the scene of the tales which it recast to localities with which it had at least a nominal familiarity. The relation of these literatures, down to a comparatively recent period, was, therefore, not that of dependence upon each other, but that of a common origin. Nothing shows this more clearly than the demonology of tales as told respectively by the oriental and the European. The Arab converted the

ancient fiery gods of his desert home into afreets and jinn; the European demons, once the deities of the forest, took on the forms and the malignant disposition of reptiles, inhabiting fens and marshes and dank caverns, or lurking in the moist depths of the soil and in the wells and fountains.

III

In the case of Virgil, few or none of the legends are without a counterpart, either a tale or a belief, popular in classic times. The general theory of magic which pervaded Europe in the middle ages owed its existence to classical tradition, modified by the vast accumulation of isolated facts in natural science, and by the change in religious belief from polytheism to monotheism. Pliny was as severe in his denunciation of magic as any modern writer could be, but he included divination, the most profitable branch of trade with the quack astrologer and magician of the present day, in the circle of legitimate sciences. Many things which he related as facts of natural science were in truth only the figments of popular imagination, not yet released from the bonds of that nature worship whose ritual is magic. Apuleius talked of mathematicians as if their principal use was in the calculation of nativities. His defence, when accused of magic, is one of the works which bring us near the superstitions of classic times. Although the charges against him were trumped up by his enemies, yet, to have had any plausibility at all, they must have been in agreement with the general opinion of the times as to what constituted magical practices. From Apuleius's speech, it is to be inferred that in classical Europe devotion to philosophy, and especially to natural science, was

vulgarly deemed an indication of a taste for magic; that poetry and music were a species of incantation; that a mirror in the hands of a philosopher was supposed to be an instrument of supernatural potency; that a mysterious disease like epilepsy was thought to be the result of a magician's malice; that the inhabitants of certain countries were specially skillful in magic arts; that lamps, altars and the sacrilegious imitation of religious rites could be used to baleful purpose by the magician; that statues were sometimes endued with magical powers, and that little images, in the nature of the mediæval talismans, were not infrequently used; that an agate, upon being subjected to the action of fire, became sensitive to the diseased condition of the human body, and revealed unsoundness when it was not otherwise apparent; and that the divinations of astrologers and the miracles of magicians were rendered successful by an order of beings intermediate between gods and men. These particulars, and others of a similar character, formed the magic-lore of the middle ages, and some of the very beliefs which Apuleius discussed involve the main points in the legends of Virgil.

Apuleius was a vain man. He was not unwilling to have the reputation of magic, if he could evade the penalty. Therefore, his argument was so conducted as to lead his hearers to an opinion of magic—not as wholly nugatory, which had been the object of Pliny's historical sketch, but as distinguished into two kinds, the one honorable and useful to men, the other wicked and malevolent. This distinction has been urged over and over again by theorists in times when a belief in magic prevailed. It was argued that magic, in the hands of a good man, was equivalent to turning the weapons of evil spirits against themselves. But this hypothesis was far removed from

the popular convictions on the subject, and the words magic and magician never have been used in a good sense without manifest reluctance. While the conception of magical efficiency was involved in the tales about Virgil, men were slow to write down the disagreeable word. Alexander Neckam would doubtless have resented the use of it as not applicable in any sense to the "glorious poet." As has been said, Conrad of Querfurt, a German clergyman and statesman, who wrote shortly after Neckam, was not troubled by the same scruples. He was naturally prejudiced against the Italians, and probably was not affected by any reverence for the name of Virgil. He described Virgil's peculiar learning by the term *ars magica*. Both writers meant exactly the same thing. The common opinion of the time was that mechanical, astrological or mathematical means were possible by which the most astonishing marvels could be performed. This precluded at first the idea of diabolism in the minds of scholars from being attached to these narratives and others of a similar character, because it was presumed that a scientific hypothesis had now been formed which satisfactorily accounted for supposed facts of history. This hypothesis once granted, the chain of evidence was satisfactory to the mediæval mind which rested upon authority with so much confidence. It was accepted as a fact that there had been a temple in Rome called the *Salvatio Romæ* which enabled the Romans to discover treason plotted in any part of the Empire, and that this temple fell in accordance with prophecy when Christ was born. Now there was testimony to prove that Virgil had been a prophet of Christ, not only in his own writings, but in the writings of the fathers of the Church. That his learning was infinite had been shown by Macrobius; therefore, no man of antiquity was more likely to

have built the temple than Virgil. In many parts of his work, *De Naturis Rerum*, Neckam's reasoning is of this inconclusive sort. Gervase of Tilbury, somewhat later than Conrad, like Neckam, reluctant to ascribe the Virgilian wonders to magic, used technical phrases current in that age, calling Virgil's extraordinary power a *vis mathesis* or an *ars mathematica*. These phrases do not seem now to be capable of a double meaning, but that they had diverse meanings in the middle ages, and that these variations of sense were prejudicial to true science, is shown in a notable remark of Roger Bacon which not only explains the conflicting notions entertained of mathematics, but indirectly shows exactly what Gervase meant by his tender and dubious expressions as applied to Virgil. "One *mathematica*," wrote Bacon, "is derived from *mathesi*, the middle syllable short and aspirated; this kind of mathematics is a part of sound learning and can not be reprehended, as I have shown [in another place] by the words of holy men and of philosophers. The other is derived from *matesi*, the middle syllable long and unaspirated, from *mantis*, or *amanteia*, as says Jerome. This is the second of the two divisions of magic which are *mantike, mathematike, maleficium, praestigium, sortilegium*. And this only of the two kinds of mathematics is condemned by holy men and philosophers, as appears from Aristotle, Plato, Pliny, Tully and all the rest." In the confusion of mind which prevailed at the time when Gervase wrote, he could not have been capable of making this distinction. All mathematics was magic to him. A knowledge of geometry implied a direct and marvellous power over the forces of nature. Therefore, whatever form of words he or others used respecting Virgil, they left but one impression on the minds of their readers. This impression was one

promptly interpreted by the German romancers to mean diabolism.

IV

To the mediæval Christian it was clear that every pagan had been in the nature of things a worshiper of devils. The corrupt Platonism of the early Christian centuries had its counterpart in the history of each newly-converted race. Apuleius only expressed the common belief of all men in his famous argument to prove the existence of an aerial order of beings—that nature would not suffer the fourth element, air, to be without inhabitants suited to its own mobile character, when all the other elements were replete with life; but Christians, learned and unlearned, accepted this argument in a new sense wrested from the obscure phrase of Paul respecting the prince of the power of the air. The beings of the air, gifted with abilities above those of humanity, were supposed to be altogether evil and maleficent. By the workings of this principle, the pantheons of Europe were gradually converted into collections of fiends, fairies and hobgoblins, deprived of their divinity, but not shorn of their power; and natural and theological science was burdened for ages with the labor of accounting for creatures now denied any reality whatever. In the thirteenth century the Latin races, although they retained many of their early superstitions, ceased to use them indiscriminately as a means of explaining everything which they did not understand. With the Germans the case was different. The conversion of the Teutonic tribes to Christianity had been a slow and gradual process. Here and there paganism, with its antique ritual, held its place for centuries in the midst of

communities nominally Christian. Even when this state of things passed away, the Germans retained to a greater measure than other races the belief in those existences intermediate between man and the inhabitants of Heaven. They felt themselves to be living continually in the society of these mysterious invisible powers whose workings they beheld in the violent winds, in the electric storm, in the cloud-burst and the earthquake, and in the accidents of human life. This ancient faith was woven into their language, and it was, moreover, something to which the early missionaries could not object, since there was nothing in the new creed that forbade this particular manifestation of popular credulity. But the tendency of Christian teaching was to lower the reputation of these subaltern deities of the forest, the fountain, the marsh and the river. In the thirteenth century there were still good fairies, but the malicious, evil spirits were far the more numerous among the people of the air. When the wonder-working of Virgil came to be a theme of popular writings in Germany, it was naturally subjected to the influence of this universal cult.

Another thing which had to do with the infusion of demonism into these and other tales of a like character was the feeling toward learning and toward the language used by the learned. The popular genius, upon discovering that it also had the power of expression, was not thereupon emancipated from that superstitious awe in the presence of the ancient classical language which had kept it silent so long. The Latin was thought to have a magical potency, and the mastery of it was an occult science. It was not the only tongue in which converse was held with evil spirits, but it was one of those which could be most successfully used in conjuring. The scholar

was feared because he was thought to have a dangerous power, the possession of which was a temptation to malevolence. This common misapprehension and dread of learning and learned men could not fail to produce a disposition of mind favorable to demonology in place of the fine-spun theories of Neckam, Gervase and Vincent of Beauveis.

The whole complexion of the tales respecting Virgil's supernatural allies is Teutonic. The first writer who connected the notion of evil spirits distinctly with Virgilian magic was Jans Enenkel of Vienna, who completed his *Weltbuch* about 1250. In taking up the tales concerning Virgil, Enenkel added such particulars as to show that the German race had already thought out two of the essential characteristics of that strange symbol of human thought and activity which was afterward to be known under the name of Doctor Faustus. The devils are bound to oblige Virgil, and they tempt him with the promise of the pleasures which they can procure for him. Of the superstition concerning the assigning of one's soul to the devil in consideration of a fixed term of years to be lived in the enjoyment of uninterrupted pleasure and power and wealth, Enenkel seemed to have no knowledge. His devils are found by accident and dismissed almost as soon as they are discovered. In the rude verse of this chronicler, Virgil was represented as a child of hell, totally devoid of moral sense; a heathen in religion, but a magician of great power, who attained his wicked learning without seeking it. One day while he was digging in a vineyard, he came upon a glass filled with what he supposed to be worms. When he picked it up he heard a voice saying:

"Virgil, let us out. We will protect you forever against all harm. Let us go into the fields and we will teach you many

arts which will give you joy and amusement until your death. We are in great distress, because there are seventy-two of us corked up in this little bottle."

"Teach me the art," said Virgil, "and I will break the bottle and set you free."

So they taught him all that they knew themselves, and then Virgil opened the bottle and the devils crawled out and disappeared. All the wonders that Virgil did are attributed to his bargain with the seventy-two devils whom he released from prison.

The author of the *Reinfrit von Braunschweig*, who obtained most of his inspiration from French models, nevertheless interjected into his narrative a fragment which strangely mingled the notion of Virgil as a prophet with the later attribute of devilish craft. Upon the magnetberg—the Teutonic counterpart of the mountain of loadstone in the Arabian tales—of which mention is frequent in mediæval German poetry, there lived long ago a Babylonian prince, who was a most skillful necromancer. His name, Zabulon, may easily be supposed to be a corruption of the word *diabolus*. He read in the stars that twelve hundred years after his own death the Saviour would appear upon the earth, and would destroy the whole race of magicians. By every art which he was master of he endeavored to overcome the decree of destiny. When the period of twelve hundred years was nearing its end Virgil was born. He grew up to be a man of so kindly a disposition that in the effort to benefit others he impoverished himself. Having heard the tradition of Zabulon as the first and greatest necromancer of the world, he resolved to seek the treasures stored in the magnetberg. He knew that Zabulon was the inventor of astrology, and that he had left

many books containing the secrets of his art. Virgil found his way to the Babylonian necromancer's treasure house, and, with the aid of a friendly spirit inclosed in the ruby of a ring, like a fly in amber, he obtained not only a vast weight of gold and silver, but also the magician's books. The period of twelve hundred years—a remarkable coincidence—ended at the very moment of his success. Virgil learned from the books of the necromancer of the birth of Christ, and of the beginning of a new dispensation in the affairs of the world.

Heinrich von Muglin, who lived toward the end of the fourteenth century,* put into verse a tale which embodies some of the features made familiar by the narratives that have just been given. But it also epitomized the vague, magical fancies with which the Germans invested what they learned of the enterprise of the Venetians. The South Germans, from their long sojourn in the interior of the continent, cut off almost entirely from travel or traffic by the sea, necessarily gathered superstitious notions respecting a people who passed their lives on the salt water. None save those who have lived to manhood far away from the ocean can imagine the oppression which the imagination is under at the first view of that trackless, mobile, infinite, rounded surface rising before the eye to the vast circle of the horizon. The mediæval Germans felt this terror and mystery of the sea. Wonders, they thought, must lie beyond the treacherous, ever-moving flood. Those who dared its mystery and its perils must have more

*The name of this poet should, perhaps, be written *von Muegling*. He was distinguished among the meistersingers. There is some agreeable information respecting him in Mr. H. E. Krehbiel's *Review of the New York Musical season*, 1885-6, p. 101. See, also, Wagenseil, *De Sacri Rom. Imperii Libera Civitate Noribergensi Commentatio*, [*Buch von der Meistersinger.*]

than mortal power, and a greater than natural purpose. Their vessel must be guided by supernatural beings and they themselves must be in league with demons. A favorite device in fiction to account for the guidance of ships, which was dwelt upon long after the use of the mariner's compass became familiar, was to describe birds gifted with supernatural instinct whose flight instructed the pilot. If the voyage was to be prosperous, these birds were beautiful and of good omen; if it was to end in disaster, the fact was presaged in the hatefulness of the winged guides. There is a passage in that curious monument to the exploring spirit of the sixteenth century, *The History of Polexander*, which not only illustrates this peculiarity, but also brings into relief by contrast the belief of the mediæval Germans in the mountain of magnetic ore. As there was an island which the mariner could not avoid when he had entered the circle of its influence, so there was another island which eluded the search even of the most skillful navigator. The whole of that ponderous romance, whose title has just been given, turned upon the baffled hopes and desires of the hero, who wandered hither and thither in the Atlantic Ocean, looking for the Inaccessible Island. But nothing was easier to find when the proper guidance had been obtained. After many vicissitudes, Polexander and his faithful servitor, Diceus, were taken up by a vessel which belonged to the queen of the island they had sought so long in vain. Diceus quickly found the key to the puzzle which had vexed his master and himself through all the previous years of wandering and danger. "Assoone as a little gale from the shore had put the sacred vessell out of the Haven, Diceus (who had Lynx, his eyes, in all places where he came discovered what was most hidden), perceived in the Pilot's cabbin, two birds, as white as swans,

and marking (unnoted) how they fed them, imagined that 'twas by that sleight Alcidiana's Pilots were us'd to returne to the Inaccessible Island. Assoone, therefore, as the ship was out at sea, the birds flew out of Linceus his cabbin at a window, and presently appearing over the ship, were saluted with many shouts of joy by the Mariners and Pilgrims; those birds flying in a middle height, were always a bow-shot before the ship and serving Linceus instead of Star or Compasse, showed him what way he was to steer." The adventure of Virgil, as related by von Muglin, was far from being as fortunate as that of Polexander. In order to present to ourselves the idea which the German versifier had, we must imagine the picturesque figure of a ranting, roaring blade, half pirate, half explorer, one of many who swarmed out of the Adriatic in all directions, and braved every danger for the sake of gain. Nothing is left of the real Virgil except the name. A mere Italian buccaneer, he gathered about him a company of choice spirits like himself, who, under his command, set sail from Venice to seek their fortunes. The voyagers took leave of their wives and children with assurances of a speedy and prosperous return. But before their ship had sailed far it was overtaken by two birds of ill-omen called *grifen*. The sense of this word and the sound of it lead one to suspect that von Muglin had in mind something which he had heard or read concerning the griffons of ancient mythology. The birds led them westward for a year and a day. Then the mariners became aware of the fact that they were approaching the fatal Agetstein, another name for the magnetic mountain. In vain they prayed to the Virgin Mary to turn their vessel aside from the dreaded mountain. The demon birds led the way to the rocks and then disappeared

with hoarse croakings of triumph. The sailors, expecting nothing but a speedy death, broke out into loud lamentations:

Wir komen nimer mer hin heim zu wiben und zu kinden,

they cried, but Virgil, leaving the wreck, mournfully and laboriously ascended the rugged cliff. The summit of the mountain was a level plateau. As he walked about there, his eye fell upon a glass bottle. He picked this up and found, as a matter of course, that it was the prison of a devil. In his eagerness to be released from his narrow cell, the spirit promised to aid Virgil and his companions. But Virgil was not to be caught by a mere promise, so the demon, in order to obtain his freedom, gave exact instructions as to the things that Virgil should do, if he desired to escape with his crew from the peril into which they had fallen. He explained that in a certain place he would find a tomb watched by a figure which smote the ground continuously so that no mortal could approach the place, except at high noon, when the flailing ceased for an instant. In that instant Virgil was told that he might seize a letter of talismanic virtue which the figure had. He succeeded in doing this, and, entering the tomb, found a corpse, and beneath the corpse a book, which the bottle imp assured him would give all the directions necessary for his safe return to Venice. This book, however, was a book only in appearance. When Virgil turned back the lid to see what sort of a treatise had fallen into his possession, great was his astonishment to have eighty thousand devils tumble out of the enchanted casket. They gathered about him threateningly and demanded immediate employment. Virgil was frightened at first in the midst of this clamorous army of supernatural beings, who danced and leaped and cut fantastic capers in their desire to be doing something.

"What do we here?" they cried; "we may no longer bide."

Had he not spoken, they would undoubtedly have torn him limb from limb, according to the well-known custom of the goblins when they are evoked by an inexperienced or cowardly mortal; but Virgil, recovering from his alarm, exclaimed:

"Into the greenwood, all of you, and make me at once a good road, on which a man may walk or ride as he chooses."

The devils began this task with alacrity. Meanwhile, Virgil descended the mountain to the beach, where the sailors sat lamenting over the wreck which strewed the jagged rocks. He offered to rescue them if they would reward him. He declared that he would have them all safe at home in the winking of an eye. They replied that all their wealth should be his, if he carried out this promise. In a moment they were all at home in Venice. What became of the eighty thousand and one devils, whom Virgil had evoked, von Muglin does not pretend to say. Thus at a stroke the great Roman was deprived of his glory as a poet and his distinction as a man of learning, and was reduced to the level of a mediæval trader, cunning at a bargain and fortunate, even in his accidental intercourse with the devil. Such a tendency to depreciate Virgil could not be reconciled with any view of his personality, other than that taken by von Muglin. Shorn of all dignity, if the name of the poet had been preserved only in the verses of these barbarous story tellers, it would have become a mere by-word, with which to frighten children, or to fill out the nonsense rhythm of some rustic game. Indeed, in modern Poland the only relic of the Virgilian superstition is a game similar to the English "Simon says thumbs up," in which the players repeat a puerile rhyme, meaning, it is said, "Daddy Virgil said to his children, 'Children, here, do as I do.'"

In the fifteenth century Felix Hemmerlin narrated how a devil put Virgil in possession of the magical book of Solomon, in the hope of being liberated from a bottle in which he was imprisoned. Virgil, upon releasing the spirit, was amazed at his gigantic proportions. Convinced that it would not be prudent to allow such a creature to be at large, he cunningly bantered the devil, saying:

"Surely you could not now reduce yourself to the size of that bottle?"

"Easily," replied the demon.

Virgil persisted in his feigned disbelief, until finally the devil, to prove the truth of his words, returned into the flask. Virgil instantly clapped the stopper back in its place and left the unfortunate devil in prison forever. He retained the book of magic, though, and thus became master of all in the black art.

This tale, which resembles so closely the tale of the fisherman and the jinn in *The Thousand and One Nights*, and the frequent allusions to the magnetic mountain, link the species of German folk-lore utilized in the tales concerning Virgil with the Arabian tales. But it is to be observed that all these German tales were written before the year fourteen hundred. Mr. Edward William Lane, in the notes of his translation of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, maintains that the earliest possible date to be assigned to that collection, so far as the Arabians are concerned must be subsequent to the beginning of the fourteenth century, and the weight of probability is on the side of the opinion that they were not written out until about the beginning of the sixteenth century. The legend concerning the making of the collection indicates also that the work was not done piecemeal, but that a translation was made

in the period between the two dates mentioned of tales indigenous to Persia or India, which had already been collected and transcribed by men of letters in Persia. It is extremely doubtful, therefore, if the Germans could have owed their knowledge to any literary forms obtained from the Saracens. They are more likely to have drawn their inspiration from the unwritten tales of the crusade camps, and from the reminiscences of travelers and merchants who returned out of the Farther East. The indirect testimony of von Muglin's narrative is that the Germans owed much in this way to the commerce of Venice. That Virgil and his companions should have traveled westward to find the *Agetstein*, and not eastward, indicates a vague recollection of antique superstitions respecting the Atlantic coast of Africa, rather than an acquaintance with the Saracen Empire to the eastward. Besides the points of similarity alluded to, there is an evident relationship between the German Zabulon, the inventor of magic and astrology, and the fallen angels, Haroot and Maroot of Arabian mythology, who were supposed to have incurred the eternal resentment of Allah, by teaching these forbidden arts to men. A curious detail respecting Haroot and Maroot, which marks an important line of communication with the Far East, open to both Europeans and Arabians, is that the first Arabian visitor to the cavern where these gigantic offenders were imprisoned, was conducted thither by a Jew.

VI

In the later times when the craze of witchcraft became the terror of human life in Europe, not only the Germans, but most of the other nations of Europe accepted without question

the tales of Virgil's league with devils. At the final outcome of these legends, they were all digested into a connected narrative, which became, like the story of Faust, well known in all the languages of Western Europe. In this pseudo-biography it was related that when Virgil was born the town of Rome quaked and trembled in dread of so dire an advent. Even in his childhood he was subtle and crafty and wise beyond the measure of man. He was, therefore, sent to school at Toledo, the abode of magical learning throughout the greater part of the mediæval period. He was a lonely person, and loved nothing better on a holiday than to ramble by himself among the hills, out of the sight of his teachers and comrades. In one of these solitary walks, he discovered the opening of a cavern. Curious to know what there was in the mysterious and darksome place, he ventured so far into the bowels of the mountain that the light of day was lost behind him. As he went on he imagined that he saw a glimmer of light from the depths of the cave. He pressed toward the source of this fitful ray, and as he went he heard a voice crying:

"Virgil, Virgil!"

Wondering who could be so familiar with his name in that uncanny gloom, he peered in every direction, and that anxiously, but could see nothing. Finally, he asked aloud who it was that called him. Again his name was repeated, and again he answered. Then the voice came with the words:

"Do you not see the board that lies at your feet with a name upon it?"

Virgil replied that he saw it dimly.

"Lift the board and let me out," said the voice.

"But who are you?" inquired Virgil with caution.

"I am a devil," was the reply. "I was conjured out of a man whom I had possessed, and have been banished to this cell until the Day of Judgment, unless I can in the meantime persuade a mortal to release me. I pray you deliver me out of this painful prison. I will show you many books of magic [nygromancy, nigromance] so that you shall come easily into a perfect knowledge of that science, and I will show you how you may obtain whatever you desire."

Virgil was tempted by these promises. He bade the demon tell him where the books were kept. In his anxiety to be released, the fiend showed less acuteness than is usually credited to his race. He gave Virgil such directions that the wonderful library was soon in the student's possession. Virgil kept faith, however, by taking away the board which covered the prison of the spirit. The latter wriggled out of his narrow quarters in the shape of an eel, and then rose up by the side of Virgil in the shape of a man, but so gigantic that the youth was frightened. By a device similar to that described in the narrative of Felix Hemmerlin, he prevailed on his dangerous companion to return into his prison, where, as the veracious chronicler remarked, the devil remains to this day.

It is a singular fact that although diabolism grew to the proportions in the Virgilian legends which have been indicated in the foregoing pages, it figured in the work of one Italian writer only who professed to relate the magical deeds of Virgil. In the *Aliprandina*, a versified chronicle of Mantua, written early in the fifteenth century, it is stated that Virgil, who was reputed to be a magician, was imprisoned by Octavian. He released himself and journeyed in a ship created by enchantment to Naples. On the way he became hungry and sent one of the familiar spirits who served him back to Rome

to steal the victuals from Octavian's table. With this indirect and apparently casual reference to the devil of Virgil, Italian popular literature was satisfied, as, indeed, it might well be, since it retained a clear memory of the real achievements of the Augustan poet.

VII

Within the limitations of that early popular literature, from which the narratives here repeated have been taken, the devil, as portrayed, is the exact fac-simile of the common Teutonic ideal of the period to which the literature belongs. Virgil's devils, like the other evil spirits in German mythology, were manifest types of the forces of nature. Their existence furnished an adequate cause for every relic of the Roman power that remained. In sober fact, the road which von Muglin described was the counterpart of a Roman highway. But the popular notions concerning the devil had not yet been rounded out and completed. In the times when the legends about Virgil were written, diabolism was so crude that the story tellers had no suitable device for getting rid of evil spirits at the conclusion of a tale. In the narratives that have been discussed in these pages, the clumsy versifiers simply ignored this problem, manifestly an important one from an artistic point of view. Enenkel's devils ran away, and so did the multitude which von Muglin let loose upon a suffering world. At least these writers leave the matter entirely to inference. Hemmerlin, indeed, succeeded in rebottling his spirit, but the ludicrous weakness of his invention can easily be seen by one who tries to imagine how the ruse would work with that suave, polished, agreeable, sharp-witted, immoral gentleman in black,

the popular devil of modern times. Virgil never could have hoodwinked him. Mephisto could put himself in a bottle, if he chose, but he never could be caught under the seal of Solomon. But crude as these early tales were, they showed a steady growth from first to last in the diabolical ideal. The vague suspicion of demoniac influence conveyed by the learned phrases of Conrad of Querfurt was articulated by Enenkel in the puerile fancy that the devils of Virgil looked like a wriggling mass of earth worms. In the hands of von Muglin, a century later, these became the mischievous little beings of the greenwood familiar to German folk-lore. At last Felix Hemmerlin gives the devil of Virgil the dignity of gigantic size. There was a corresponding growth in the apparent malignity of the devil and of his power to do harm to mortals. What was merely curious to Enenkel became frightful to Hemmerlin and the redactors of the Virgilian pseudo-biography. But, after all, the devils of Virgil were a simple-minded, down-trodden, unfortunate, servile race. They were always in prison, waiting for some mortal to release them, and they were always overreached by the lucky man who found them. Without attempting to record all the steps that were taken in the development of magical diabolism in the period between the opening of the fifteenth and the close of the sixteenth century, the outcome may be seen in the English *History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Dr. John Faustus*, translated from the German *Faust-sage* about the year 1589. The conception of the evil spirit had grown immeasurably in less than two centuries, and the terror and abhorrence of mankind had risen in proportion. The devil was no longer to be accidentally found cooped up in bottles or hidden in some cavern. He must be worshiped with a cult as elaborate as

that with which the Divine Being was honored. Even to those who paid him such homage as he desired, he did not present himself in person, but sent his messengers. Faust, having made himself expert in the vocabula, figures, characters, conjurations and other ceremonials indispensable to the art of necromancy, was eager to test his powers in an effort to bring the devil before him. He went one night into a thick wood near Wittenberg, and at a place where the intersection of two paths made the sign of a cross he described with his wand a circle in the dust, and within that drew many other circles and characters. Then he called on Mephistopheles in the name of Beelzebub, the Prince of Hell, to appear in his own proper form. A frightful thunderstorm followed, and then, when Faust was about to leave his circle in a fright, such pleasant music was heard that he could not but tarry. He renewed his conjurations, and there appeared before him successively a horrible dragon, a flame that seemed to dart down at him from heaven, and finally a fiery globe. The globe bursting asunder, disclosed the figure of a man, shaped out of fire. This figure whirled about Faust's circle many times, and at last, assuming the habit and appearance of a gray friar, showed himself to be the one whom Faust desired to see. This being of fire could take instantly whatever shape he chose, he argued with all the subtlety of one trained in scholasticism; he gave no favors for which he did not get manifold repayment, and he yielded service to no mortal, except when he saw a malicious end to be gained. The magician's spells did not compel him to act; they only displayed the temper and eagerness, the desires and intentions of the worshiper. When this overshadowing notion of the devil is viewed in its relation to the times, it is not difficult to realize the fervor with which

men persecuted those accused of witchcraft. Were a single line of instances sufficient for a generalization, it would be fair to conclude that in the fear of the devil the age that witnessed the reformation and renaissance was darker far than the preceding centuries. Diabolism never flourished in the civilized world at any other epoch as it did in that epoch. Men's minds were weighed down by the terrors of the magical spirit of evil. This can be said without any theological bias. The devil of the magicians, the devil with horns and hoofs, the serpent devil, the devil at whom Luther threw his inkstand, was not the devil of theological dogma, nor the devil of the Scriptures. He was the creature of a fervid imagination, who had become a real existence to millions of human beings. He belonged to an age most credulous in all matters pertaining to the supernatural. Whatever weight may be attached to the Virgilian tales adds so much strength to the opinion that the world, in this matter of demonism, went steadily backward from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. Later it became possible to disperse the clouds of mysticism that hung about the devil, divest him of his magical cloak and restrain him to the limits of Scriptural definition.

THIRD—IN LITERARY TRADITION

I

In his unconscious power of exciting veneration, Virgil stands almost alone among the Roman poets. His works were the natural outcome of his character, but in them the Romans found all that was best of their national legends, religion and literature. It is a common opinion in respect to the Homeric poems that they are the residuum, so to speak, of a literature earlier than the art of writing. The fragments of the Greek bards have been united by some transcendent genius into one exalted epos. Virgil's national work consists likewise of fragments gathered in the patient study of earlier Greek and Roman writers. It is a mosaic of precious gems and exquisite colors, joined by the hand of a master artist so skillfully that it is doubtful if the most acute critic, by mere inspection, could distinguish what is Virgil's own from what he has appropriated. While observing how the object had been attained, the Romans felt that in the Æneid they possessed the most complete interpretation of their national life they could ever expect to see.

The literary class in Rome were well aware of the distinction between the creative power evinced in Homer and the skill

which could produce a successful imitation. But they gloried in the fact that of all imitations, whether Greek or Latin, the one which alone rivaled the perfection of the model was the one most intimately associated with their national renown. In an important and special sense, the Æneid had all the value and power of an original creation, and that was in its adaptation to the times and to the character of the people whom indirectly it celebrated. The Romans had no recollection of an epoch when the elements of their national character had yet to be united. The definite past which they looked back upon gave them a prophetic anticipation of the destiny they were to fulfill. The natural outcome of this feeling of historic unity was an enthusiasm that formed, to a large extent, the motive of all Roman literature, and occasioned the production of those epics, the long catalogue of which is a notable phenomenon in the annals of Latin book-making. With most of these poets, the patriotism, though hearty enough, was rudely expressed; but in the case of Virgil, the leader of a new school of letters, the pride in his country was shown to be capable of the most harmonious and polished expression. He aimed to make a poem, carefully finished, even to the slightest details, but possessed of all the elements conducive to universal popularity. It was fortunate, perhaps, for his fame, that death prevented his making the changes in his manuscript which he proposed; he had already displayed a growing tendency to an overrefinement that might have marred the apparent spontaneity of his poem. As it was, the impression produced by the merely extraneous and mechanical characteristics of the work was profound. As a model of form it was admired from the moment it first saw the light, and this admiration was not diminished, even in the darkest part of the

middle ages, nor amid the copious productiveness of modern times.

The respect accorded Virgil by his literary contemporaries was exaggerated by later poets into a religious ceremonial. Petronius, with fine discrimination, characterized Virgil as *The Roman*, thus contrasting the native hue of his genius with that of all other poets, including his own countrymen. But others were less moderate. Propertius called the Æneid a greater poem than the Iliad, and later Martial extravagantly remarked that Maro, if he had chosen, might have surpassed the lyrics of Horace, the odes of Pindar and the tragedies of Varius. The wealthy virtuoso, Silius Italicus, who said of Virgil's provincial city:

> **Mantua, musarum domus, atque ad sidera cantu**
> **Evecta Aonio, et Smyrnæis æmula plectris,**

was far more diligent in celebrating Virgil's birthday than his own. He set the fashion of pilgrimages to the tomb of the poet, and of offering sacrifices there, just as he would have done in the temple of the gods. Statius alluded to Virgil's tomb as a temple. Martial declared that, as Diana had rendered sacred the Ides of May, and Mercury those of August, so Maro consecrated the Ides of October. It was the example of these poets which led Papinius to celebrate the birthday of Lucan. In thus offering divine honors to the memory of Virgil, these poets opened the way for those miraculous stories that began soon to be related.

The sharp criticism to which Virgil's works were subjected tended, rather than otherwise, to intensify the affection of his votaries for him; while the rapid decline of the Latin language in spirit and power, which made it an impossible task even to imitate him, caused him to be revered as a superhuman master

of expression. Fashion joined hands with learning to exalt the poet's subject and style. The learned lady spoken of by Juvenal, as discoursing to a circle of educated people upon the merits of Virgil, exemplified a common practice of the times. Virgil's verses were declaimed at the theatres, recited at banquets, written on the walls of houses and inscribed on the utensils of the table. His poems, elegantly copied on vellum, constituted the most acceptable token of friendship that a refined taste could suggest. The teachers of grammar hastened to take them up as the most suitable literature that could be found for the instruction of the Roman youth. During the first century of the Empire and part of the second, the grammarians dominated the whole field of letters, and from their ranks rose specialists who composed elaborate and important works upon all the new poets, but particularly upon Virgil. These were modeled upon the grammatical treatises common in the Greek language; but while the same method of illustration could be used with Virgil that had been invented for Homer, as an authority on points of usage he was viewed in a light altogether new. Although Homer's language was studied by the Alexandrian scholars, his verbal forms never could be endued with anything more than historic interest. His poems were imitated in some highly artificial, and purely academical productions; but they could never be made to serve as the basis of a grammatical system to be adopted by writers in general. Virgil, on the other hand, the exponent of the highest development reached by Latin literature, was properly the ultimate standard of appeal upon every point of grammar. Thus, from the beginning there was anxiety—not always tempered with judgment—as to the correct reading of doubtful passages. Critics employed their time, not only in

emending the text according to individual conjecture, but also with the guidance of authoritative manuscripts, handed down in his household, and even his own autographic copies, mentioned as still extant in the times of Pliny, Quintilian and Aulus Gellius. Scholars disputed upon passages of Virgil when they visited each other, when they met in the booksellers' shops, and when they were traveling together. They discussed the meaning and propriety of the words he used, the mythological, geographical or historical matters to which he alluded; made observations and strictures on his style, censured particular passages, and compared the verses imitated from the older Latin writers or from the Greek with the originals. Such were the subjects treated by Iginus, Probus, Aristarchus, Annæus Cornutus, by Gellius and his friends. Others, like Asper, made commentaries designed to accompany the works of the poet.

II

The rhetoricians who rose to precedence in literature during the latter part of the second century were slow to acknowledge the merit of Virgil. Fronto, the great apostle of pedantic oratory, slighted the author of the Æneid for the earlier and ruder poets. Apuleius, though in some of his works he quoted freely from Virgil, doubtless preferred the more archaic writers. So the whimsical Caligula condemned the works of Virgil as devoid of genius and unprofitable in their teaching. The upheaval of uncultured or barbarian modes of thought and life, which distorted where it did not destroy the literary traditions, had its effect upon the reputation of Virgil. The native religion had been corrupted with the monstrous symbolism of the East. Men of learning degraded the objects

which they treated by mingling in their discourses the slang of the streets with obsolete phrases, foreign idioms and words newly coined from their own brains. In that melancholy period all legitimate science fell into decay, and the place of knowledge was occupied by a congeries of puerile and debasing superstitions. The imaginations of men were affected by the false pretences of magic, by the alleged miracles of licentious enthusiasts, by supposititious prophecies, by sibylline forgeries, by Milesian novels and specious schemes of fortune telling. To the admirers of Apuleius, who wrote and spoke a language complicated by various foreign influences, Virgil must have seemed nerveless, colorless, tame and insipid. His greatness with them must have been solely a matter of tradition. It was impossible for an age which applauded the declamatory verse of Statius justly to appreciate Virgil. The fame of the poet had acquired, however, too much authority by the efforts of the grammarians, and by the continual use of his works in the schools of instruction, to be displaced by this reactionary movement. In the prevalent condition of literary taste, veneration that could not be shaken off must degenerate into a superstitious regard. Thus arose under the Antonines the custom of using the Æneid as a means of fortune telling; opening the leaves as chance dictated and interpreting as lucky or unlucky the first passage that caught the eye. This was the *Sors Virgiliana* of Hadrian, which was used also by other Emperors, as in the cases of Claudius Albinus, Alexander Severus and the two Gordiani. Puerile as the fashion was, it showed the degree of reverence felt for Virgil's works. They were now looked upon as the inspired writings of the race. Therefore, Alexander Severus, at a time when Platonism, although corrupted, constituted the religion of culture, only

expressed the common sentiment in saying that Virgil was the Plato of poets; and performed an act universally sanctioned in placing the statue of Virgil beside that of Achilles. But the line of proper literary tradition was broken, and in the excessive veneration for Virgil's name an element was already to be found to which the term legendary might be applied.

III

The movement away from the Virgil of history and of the earlier tradition became still more obvious in the fourth and fifth centuries. In some respects this period, in its relation to Virgil, may be compared to the era of Shakespearean revival, which began among English scholars near the middle of the eighteenth century and has continued down to the present day. As great enthusiasm was manifested then as we are cognizant of among the zealous worshipers of Shakespeare. The forced interpretation of Virgil's meaning could be discounted with many modern essays on the play of *Hamlet* or on *The Sonnets*. The same is true, to a greater or less extent, in the case of the author of *Faust*. In the extravagance of its admiration, in its tendency to discover hidden meanings and in the fondness which it displays for allegory, the body of literature which is growing around the works of Goethe is strangely like the dead and forgotten literature under which Virgil's genius came near being buried. The estimate of all these writers is one not measured by reality nor restrained to the limits of human endeavor. They stand to their respective votaries in an attitude of semi-deification. Given a period in the future similar to the mediæval period, and both the English

and the German poets will be the victims of a legendary tendency as preposterous as the one from which the fame of Virgil suffered.

If we would reproduce the conception of Virgil which the fifth century transmitted to its successors, we must picture to ourselves not the wealthy, exclusive literary courtier of the Augustan age, but the cloaked, affected, disputatious, dogmatic ascetic whom the Neo-Platonists dignified with the title of philosopher, a brusque, ill-mannered mystagogue. In this guise his character as the transcendent poet of the Latin world was almost forgotten. His writings became less and less familiar, and the occasional mention of his name by authors of reputed learning was in such a relation as indicated a total want of true sympathy. While the custom was still in vogue during a portion of the sixth century of reciting his verses in the popular gatherings for amusement, it was a custom which was retained in the face of the growing disapproval of the church writers. To obtain a summary view of the fluctuation in the feeling of admiration for Virgil, no better plan, perhaps, could be suggested than that of appealing to the writers of Latin verse, who were numerous, even in those centuries when literary work was most despised. We should expect to find among them a knowledge of the classical poets superior to that of their contemporaries, for the reason that the natural desire to perfect themselves in metrical composition might well incite them to the search for good models. That was, indeed, an uncritical period when he, who in the seventh century praised Bishop Isidore's library, felt called upon to inform his readers that if they were annoyed by the perusal of Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Persius, Lucan or Papinius they might turn for relief to Prudentius, Avitus, Juvencus and Sedulius. There

was a tinge of religious prejudice in the suggestion that while these poets, so deeply read in evangelical learning, remained, no necessity existed for the study of Pagan literature. Even in those days England was more liberal than Spain. The Venerable Bede, in the eighth century, devoted much attention to Virgil. While he deprecated the subject of the Æneid, he showed some perception of its merit as a work of art, as, for example, in his poems on Virginity:

> Let Maro wars in loftier numbers sing,
> I sound the praises of our Heavenly King;

His thought being, "I have a higher theme; would that I could treat it with equal power." In the ninth century Alcuin, who had obtained from the teachings of Bede a strong love of learning for its own sake, endeavoring to persuade his friend Charlemagne to send scholars to York for the purpose of copying the books in the library gathered there, arranged his list in hexametres. It is notable that he named the popular Christian poets like Juvencus and Arator before the classic poets, and of the latter he mentioned only three—Virgil, Statius and Lucan. In view of the fact that he attempted to classify the historians and grammarians, we may infer that if the enumerator had prized these three poets above the ecclesiastical verse makers, he would have placed their names first. When it is remembered that it was the Court of Charlemagne which sought to ape the manners and even the titles of the Augustan age, this unconscious violation of the order of merit becomes all the more striking.

With the eleventh century came a manifest improvement in the idea of Virgil formed by the Latin poets. Henry the Poor, an eccentric Florentine, whose leisure, while embittered by poverty, was not devoid of elegance, wrote a long poem

upon the *Diverse Freaks of Fortune and the Consolation of Philosophy*, a theme probably taken from the perusal of Boethius. Alluding to his own melancholy estate, he said his fortune would have been no better though he had been praised in the verses of Virgil, Ovid or Lucan. The fates, he graphically remarked, *Neronized* over him and his stars were adverse. But his critical perception of the difference between the genius of Virgil and that of Lucan is accurately and finely described in the words *musa*, applied to the former, and *tuba* to the latter. The passage gives unmistakable tokens that the light of the renaissance was even then brightening in Italy. Not less remarkable were the lines of Alanus Magnus, written near the close of the century, in which the writer dignified the ecclesiastical poet Sidonius with the individual merits of all the ancient poets collected together. The very exaggeration of the eulogy served to show what the acknowledged leader of Northern Europe in learning thought of the classic writers. After comparing his subject indiscriminately with the orators and philosophers of both Greece and Rome, he added that Sidonius had the fluency and smoothness of Ovid, the vividness of Lucan and the depth of Virgil, alluding in the word *abyssum* doubtless to the then popular allegorical intepretations of the Æneid. These quotations are indicative of the neglect into which the works of Virgil fell during that dull period when the decay of the Latin left Europe without a suitable instrument of literary expression. It is necessary to add but one more selection for the sake of emphasizing the statement that in the twelfth century classical study began to be, if not more thorough and critical, at least somewhat more popular and widespread. In the early part of this century Evrard of Bethune, a rhetorical teacher of

note, composed a poem, professedly in the nature of a text book on his favorite art, to which he gave the title of *The Labyrinth*. Under the head of versification, he discussed the poets read in the schools, and with many mediæval writers, whose names are now no longer remembered, included also the most celebrated Romans, among the rest Virgil. That he wrote for the pupils, and not for men of approved learning, is clear from the elementary character of the information he thought it necessary to give. Only the following couplet is of interest here:

> Virgilio servit triplex stylus. Hæc tria thema
> Præbent, bos, et ager, historialis apex,

and this might have suggested the lines of the old English poet Barclay in his eclogues, where Virgil's poetry is thus described:

> He sange of fieldes and tilling of grounde,
> Of sheepe and oxen and battayle did he sounde.

IV

It was the most grateful form that flattery could take for persons in authority to be credited with deeds which even Virgil, were he alive, could not adequately celebrate in verse, nor could there be higher refinement of praise for the versifiers of the mediæval centuries than to speak of them as the rivals of Virgil. Such exaggerated compliments were repeated over their graves. In this manner the fame of the poet retained its lustre. Theologians imitated Jerome in maintaining the immortality of the Æneid, and readily accepted his remark that Virgil was the Homer of the Latins; literary men studied

and praised his works, and the dry chroniclers who usually concerned themselves only with the doings of kings, emperors and persons of rank, were fain to make some record of Virgil. They noted with care the date of his birth and death, and spoke of the Æneid as a poem which must have owed its supernatural perfection to the skill of a magician. The misguided zeal of theological polemics favored rather than retarded the growth of the Virgilian cult, if it may be so called, while in another direction respect for Virgil's name and works was enhanced by the exigencies of statecraft. History always lays emphasis upon the fact that rude barbarians, upon making a conquest of a civilized nation, are themselves subdued by its culture. This fact was never better shown than in the fall of the Roman Empire. The customs of the vanquished took the place of those which had been characteristic of the victors. In ruins, Rome was still the measure of all that was glorious, and the posterity of those fierce leaders who destroyed the city were flattered when they heard themselves compared to its celebrities, and even brought into affinity of blood with them. Nothing could have been more pleasing to Charlemagne than the conjecture that traced his descent from the pious Æneas; nor could any device be thought of that would serve so well to perpetuate the fame of Virgil. It enveloped the Court of Charlemagne in a mist of pedantry which affected the minds of men through a long subsequent period.

A lively interest in the writings of Virgil increased the desire to possess copies of his works. Abbots transcribed his poems and preserved these transcripts in their cloisters. Monks who had sacrificed the pleasures of the world for those of learning were diligently employed in multiplying these manuscripts. Monastic libraries soon possessed not one, or two, but many transcripts

written with all the care and illuminated with all the skill of which the copyists were capable.* That this multiplication of Virgilian manuscripts was the outcome, not of a momentary desire, but of the eager wish to obtain a thorough knowledge, is shown by the manner of writing them. Sometimes they are arranged in double columns, one column containing the text, the other the Servian commentary; sometimes in two volumes, one of which is the commentary. In other cases a multitude of interlinear and marginal glosses darken the text. Where one left a little room, there another has laboriously written, so that in one of these venerable parchments we may see crowded together the proofs of learned diligence on the part of many generations. Even the commentary is interlined with new comment as well as explained in additional manuscripts. Other glosses betray the efforts of vernacular translators. By means of this manifold contact with the poems of Virgil into which the schools and literature of these times were brought, even the prose style of many writers took a Virgilian cast, and the poetical Latinity appears so predominantly Maronic that few authors can be cited in whom this influence is not easily shown. Verses and parts of verses woven into their writings evince their indebtedness to Virgil; as may be seen in the case of Helpidius, Priscianus, Orientius, Ennodius, Boethius, Avitus, Mavortus, Honorius Scholasticus, Arator, Flavius Cresconius

*Heyne says [*de Virgilii Codicibus MSS., ad finem,*] that the number of these copies is almost incredible, but that for the most part it would be a mere waste of time to examine them. But it must be remembered that Heyne was disposed to deal with monks after the fashion set at Donnybrook Fair—wherever he saw a head, to hit it. Moreover, he was thinking only of what served to elucidate the meaning of Virgil, not of what cast a light on the prejudices, superstitions or eccentricities of the middle ages.

Corippus and Venantius Fortunatus before the opening of the seventh century; in Marcus, Bertharius, Columbanus, Aldhelm, Bede, Boniface, Paul Warnefrid, Gottschalk and Alcuin, who flourished in the two centuries that followed; in Farduelph, Angilbert, Sedulius, Ethelwolf, Theodulph, Candidus, Nigellus, Ermoldus, Berthold, Walafrid Strabo, Engelmoldus, Drepanius Florus, Milo, Agius, Abbo and Notker Balbulus of the ninth century; in Rathbode, Salomo, Fridegode, Frodoardus, Luitprandus, Theodulus, Hrotswitha, Syrus, Purchardus and Uffo of the tenth century; in Wolstan, Abbo of Fleury, Aimoin, Froumund, Fulbert, Ekkehard, Adalbero, Ingelramus, Malchus, Jotsaldus, Gilbert, Waldo, Wido, William of Apulia, Gaufrid Malaterræ and Conrad of the eleventh century; and in Radulphus Cadomensis, Sigebert, Laurentius of Verona, Domnizo, Hilarius, Fulcherius, Baldricus, Moses Bergomensis, Bernard of Cluny, William of Chester, Peter the Venerable and Osbert of Westminster in the twelfth century. The last of these writers brings us in literary history to the time when the leonine verse, which had hitherto been restricted to the hymns of the Church, extended its sway over the whole province of poetry. Under the jingling rule of rhyme, the influence of Virgil was lessened; but he did not surrender his commanding place in Latin verse without leaving traces of his presence in the vigorous life of newly-risen national literatures.

It is pertinent, in view of these examples, to remark that the knowledge of Virgil exhibited in them was not confined to the masters of learning. Wherever at any time, even the darkest, schools were known, there Virgil's works were a subject of study. The grammarians were a narrow-minded and servile race, who restricted their labors to selections and

compilations from the commentaries of Donatus and Priscian. To such an extent was Donatus used that his name was reduced to a common noun, synonymous with the term text book. But in spite of their want of independence, the grammarians proved themselves to be excellent promoters of a knowledge of Virgil. The rules which they laid down were illustrated and enforced with his verses. With similar quotations from him, the teachers in the mediæval schools explained questions in archæology, and made extracts also as themes for the study of style. In this way, perhaps, even those who never had the opportunity to draw directly from the well of Virgilian poesy gained some knowledge of it—a knowledge eked out by the anthologies. The legendary tendency of the times was shown in the fact that a grammatical quack imposed a work on the science of language upon the people as a treatise written by Virgil, who was supposed to have lived not long subsequent to the Deluge. Virgil's extraordinary learning, as set forth in his book, savored of necromancy. By it he was enabled to divide the Latin into twelve distinct languages.

V

Among religious enthusiasts, especially ascetics, the tendency was, during these centuries, to exaggerate the attractions of Virgil's poems in order to emphasize the peril that was incurred by their perusal. Herbert of Norwich dreamed that Christ appeared to him, saying: "It is not proper for the lips of those that preach Christ to recite the lies of Ovid and the inventions of Virgil." The holy man confessed that he had sinned, not only in reading, but in imitating these poets. St. Odo, having

cherished a desire to read Virgil, was deterred by a dream in which he was shown a vase of beautiful exterior, but filled with venomous serpents. He interpreted the vision to mean that the perfection of Virgil's style served only to conceal the mortal perils that lurked in his poems. A certain monk, Probus by name, is mentioned in the eleventh century as such an admirer of Virgil and Cicero that he wished his brethren to assist him in the effort to have these pagans canonized. Bishop Rigbodo of Treves was accused of being more familiar with the Æneid than with the Gospels. Vilgard, a student of Ravenna, after incessant study of the classic writers, dreamed one night, it is said, that Virgil, Horace and Juvenal appeared to him, urging him to still greater efforts in reading and explaining their works. They assured him that, if he continued in the way he had begun, he should attain a renown equal to theirs. This dream had so great an effect upon him that he began to teach many things contrary to the faith, and was finally condemned and punished for heresy.

The constant phrase in the mouths of the religious extremists was that the truth was uttered not by the orators and poets, but by fools and fishermen. It was triumphantly asked what there was in Horace to compare with the psalms, or in Virgil to compare with the Gospels. For it was not commendable in a holy man to talk of mere fables like the wars of the Æneid, the wiles of Cupid, the despair of Dido, the gloomy threshold of Pluto. What was the use of reading the empty phrases of wicked poets like Homer and Virgil and Menander? Mere graces of style were to be despised, for it was not Maro, nor Cicero, nor the most wise Homer, to whom it was said, "Go into all the world"—but to an unlearned man—St. Peter. The classic poems were denounced as inspired by the arts of

the devil—*dæmonis arte;* and it was made a matter of unavailing regret that many Catholics were to be found who, for the sake of the elegant language, preferred the vanities of pagan literature to the useful truths of the Sacred Scriptures. Holy men, while they acknowledged that in youth they had been guilty of reading with delight the lies of Virgil (the phrase of Alcuin's biographer, *mendacia Virgilii*), as they grew old, not only refused to listen to such tales, but exhorted the youth to avoid them.

VI

Not less unreal was the conception of Virgil embodied in the romances of the twelfth century. The poets of the vernacular languages thought of him as a learned clerk in the midst of a feudal society composed of dukes, barons, bishops, court-ladies, damsels, knights; yet not without a reminiscence of his fame as a poet. It would be a mistake to suppose that the wide divergence between the classic and romantic periods in poetry rendered impossible the appreciation of the ancient poets by the popular writers of the middle ages. The literary spirit of the twelfth century was not intentionally reactionary. The Latin, which was in effect still a living language, served as a means of communication between the works of antiquity, and even those new productions which had a reason for their existence quite independent of the past. While it preserved imperfectly the memory of its own vanished excellence, it was also the organ of a living sentiment, to express which it had undergone the change that made it, in comparison with the classical ideal, seem corrupt. The poets of the new languages did not condemn antiquity; on the contrary, they looked upon

it with a reverence traditional in its origin, and thoroughly legendary in its effect. Classical poetry was an unapproachable thing to be treated with homage, and it was a very frequent device with romancers to cite as the source of their narratives some real or imaginary book in the Latin. To them the ancient hero was a knight, the ancient heroine a dame of high degree; paganism was a species of magic, each national religion having its specialty in necromancy. The Æneid of Virgil, when translated by these fanciful writers, lost its distinctive character of a romantic epic, and became a legendary romance.

This conception of Virgil is illustrated in *Li Romans de Dolopathos*, the earliest work in which the story of the Seven Wise Men reached Western Europe. It is still a vexed question whether there was a peculiar Latin original of this French romance. Certainly, if there was one, it must have differed in a marked degree from the well known book, *Historia Septem Sapientium*. In the former Virgil is the most prominent character placed before the reader, while in the latter he is merely mentioned in one of the subordinate tales. That there was, in addition to the common book, a composition in Latin on the general plan of the eastern and western writings of the class alluded to, is supported by some slight documentary testimony. On the other hand, no Latin production corresponding to the *Dolopathos* is in existence; at least, it is yet to be found. This fact has been accepted by very many learned mediævalists as proof that no such Latin work ever was written. The extended discussion of this question is, perhaps, too recondite for these pages. It certainly is not germane, except in so far as it affects the fame of Virgil. Accepting the conclusion of de Montaiglon that two Latin versions were made, widely different in detail from each other, it would appear that the *Dolopathos*

was written early in the tenth century by Jean or Jehan, a monk of Hauteselve, in Lorraine, and was soon afterward translated into French verse by Herbers, a trouvere. In general plan it is similar to the ordinary versions of *The Seven Wise Men*. The prominence given to the name of Virgil is remarkable for the reason that if Jehan used any manuscript authorities, he must have had recourse either to the Arabic, the Hebrew or the Greek, versions under different titles being then extant in those languages. It is not thought possible that the Arabian tale of *The Seven Wezeers* could have been known in Europe at so early a date. In the Hebrew and Greek versions the names of Sendebar and Syntipas are very nearly literal equivalents of the oriental name Sendebad. Though these were undoubtedly known in some parts of Europe when Jehan wrote, it would seem improbable, from the peculiarity of his production, that he ever saw either of them. That the later work, the *Historia Septem Sapientium*, was founded on the Hebrew version is almost sufficient in itself to prove that Jehan's romance had no written source. The suggestion is a plausible one that the monk of Lorraine owed his inspiration to an oral narrative which, in its progress westward, had lost its oriental traits, and had taken on others more easily understood by its feudal auditors. This spoken narrative would be specially liable to drop all Eastern names, and to incorporate others which happened to appeal strongly to the story teller's imagination, and to prove agreeable to the audiences before whom he recited; and it would be assigned by each succeeding narrator to the country from which it had come to him. This theory seems probable, in spite of the vague hint given by Herbers that Jehan only converted into Latin a tale which he found written in another language.

As the *Dolopathos* has descended to the present day, it is a French poem of twelve thousand, nine hundred and one lines. The scene is the Court of Sicily, whose ruler was subject, according to the feudal idea, to the overlordship of Augustus at Rome. Dolopathos, the king, was accused of treason by an envious faction, and ordered to come to court by Augustus for the purpose of defending himself. Upon his explanation Augustus sent a messenger to Sicily to try the case, and the accusers were punished. Dolopathos, thus confirmed in the possession of his kingdom, married the daughter of King Agrippa, the niece of Augustus. The son born of this marriage was named Lucimien, and, at the age of seven years, was sent to Rome to be educated in the seven arts. After the centuries that had been spent in grammatical study, of which Virgil's works were the principal subject, it does not seem unnatural that the author of the *Dolopathos* should have formed an idea of Virgil as a great teacher. As Plato had said that a king, to be a wise ruler, must be a philosopher, so Dolopathos chose the wisest of men, renowned for his *clergie*, as his son's instructor. Virgil was a native of a city of Sicily called "Maante" or "Mantue," and he not only surpassed all other clerks in knowledge, but he was also the greatest of poets. He found Lucimien an apt pupil, who easily penetrated the mysteries of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*. Even Virgil marveled at the ease with which his pupil mastered grammar, the mother and ruler of all the arts, and the two arts of dialectic and rhetoric in which he himself excelled. The feudal idea of rank was carried by Herbers even into the schools. Virgil was looked upon by other poets as nothing less than a deity. Many other learned men were to be found at Rome, but Virgil was specially honored by the command of Cæsar, and had

over the other clerks the *mestrie* and *signorie* so that they stood to him in the relation of vassals. He was *Mestre Virgile, Magister Virgilius*, not only as distinguished from his pupils, but among the other less renowned teachers. The pupils committed to his care were those of the highest birth. His dress accorded with the honor conferred upon him. He sat upon a high seat. A rich cloak, lined with fur, was his outermost garment. Upon his head he wore a cap made of fur. The mediæval notion of a scholar completely destroyed the historical and traditionary figure of Virgil. Instead of the tall, awkward man who figured in the biography attributed to Donatus, Herbers imagined a small, withered personage, who, as men of learning were in the habit of doing, with head bent, looked upon the ground continually, as if in deep thought.

The man of great learning in the middle ages became an instructor of youth from the necessity of the case. Hardly any other employment was open to him. But this conception of Virgil, reacting upon the legitimate biographical tradition, made him the teacher of Marcellus, and finally occasioned a legend that he had founded a school at Naples, and this school was very naturally thought to have been a place for the study of magic.

VII

So in the more trivial matter of mere literary anecdote, the tendency with respect to Virgil was legendary. The earliest traditions have an historical value. Gellius and Pliny related that in their time manuscripts in the handwriting of the poet still existed. Gellius remarked, on the authority of tradition,

that Virgil was an enthusiastic student of antiquities, thus laying emphasis on a fact which is apparent to the student of the Æneid. Again, he preserved a graphic description of Virgil's method of composition which had been handed down from the Augustan age. Virgil's contemporaries said that his verses, when first put down in writing, were as shapeless as unlicked bear cubs, and that it required great labor on the part of the poet to reduce them to that smoothness and harmony for which he was famous. These are examples of the few anecdotes that may be looked upon as authentic. The same may be said of the story respecting the fortune which Octavian and Scribonia bestowed upon him, if it be taken in its simplest form. But it must be confessed that the clumsy witticisms attributed to Virgil in the life by Donatus, so-called, betray the stiffness of the schoolmaster rather than the skill of the practised literary man or the polished courtier. The reply to Mæcenas might well owe its origin to some pedagogue of an epigrammatic turn. "How shall a man preserve his good fortune?" inquired the Etruscan. "By surpassing others in justice and liberality as much as in wealth and honors," said Virgil. Or this: Mæcenas asked if there could be anything in the pursuit of which a man would not become weary. Virgil's oracular response was: "All things, save knowledge, are wearisome by reason either of their multitude or their likeness to each other." To Augustus, desiring a comprehensive rule for governing the empire well, the poet said: "Prefer the good and the prudent before the wicked, then the best men will be honored and the manifestly unjust will be excluded from power." When a friend told him how one Cornificius condemned him, he replied: "I have the penalty for him; the more care I show, and the more

praiseworthy I am, the more annoying to himself will be his envy." At another time he was vexed by the clumsy sarcasms of Philistus, a disputatious lecturer and mediocre poet, but steadily maintained a discreet silence. "You have a tongue," exclaimed Augustus, "defend yourself." Maro answered: "If he," alluding to the rhetorician, "knew when to be still, he would speak more rarely. For one should be silent unless silence is injurious, or speech profitable. He who is contentious and knows not when to quit, is reckoned by the wise with fools." Condemned for transferring passages from Homer to his own works, he rejoined: "Only the strong can wield the club of Hercules."

Some fragments of native folk-lore clustered about the name of Virgil, even as early as the time of Suetonius—for example, the stories of the portents that preceded his birth, and of the miraculous growth and virtues of the tree which was called by his name. But in the times when the study of Virgil's works was corrupted by the passion for mere legend, the most extraordinary fictions were retailed as part of the poet's genuine biography. Alexander Neckam's account of the origin of the poem entitled *Culex* was one of the least incredible of these legendary narratives. He related that when Virgil was on his journey from Athens back to his native land, he became weary by the way, and composed himself to sleep in a recess, ignorant of the fact that a serpent had chosen the place for a den. While he slept, a gnat lighted on his lip to watch over the safety of so great a guest. The serpent, upon returning to his hiding place, attempted to enter the open mouth of the unconscious philosopher. The gnat stung Maro sharply on the lip and awoke him. With swift hand he killed the little sentinel to which he owed his

safety. Looking about him, the glorious poet perceived that the insect which he had killed was really the preserver of his life; so that, while he thought himself rid of a torment, he had killed a faithful friend. To honor as best he might the memory of the gnat, before he left the shady recess, he composed a noble epitaph containing an account of the incident. At length he published a little book which he inscribed with the title *De Culice*, in which the shepherd, in danger from a serpent and awakened by a gnat, was really the poet himself. Such a story might easily grow out of the theory that the poet made many veiled allusions in his verses to the occurrences in his life. The story that Cicero, once at the theatre, upon hearing a portion of the Sixth eclogue recited, exclaimed, "*Magnæ spes altera Romæ*," meaning that though he was an aged man, and must soon be gone, here was a youth who would confer equal renown upon the literature of Rome, can not be true for obvious chronological reasons. It was the creation of a time when fanciful tales passed for history. The familiar anecdote about the verses which Virgil is said to have written on the gates of the Imperial palace must have owed its origin to an age very low in the scale of grammatical learning. It is worthy of mention that this is the only remnant of the traditions or legends respecting Virgil which has left a trace in the New World. It is from the crude verses attributed to him in this instance that the motto of the State of Georgia was taken.

In the eleventh century, the fact of Virgil's indebtedness to Octavian and his wife was expanded to legendary proportions. It was said that for the lines,

> Nocte pluit tota, redeunt spectacula mane;
> Divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet,

he was rewarded not only with gold from the treasury of Julius Cæsar, but with his liberty, having been up to this time the slave of Octavianus. Alexander of Toleta affirmed that for this distich Virgil received as his feof the city of Naples with the country of Calabria. Such an idea came easily out of the world-wide respect paid to Virgil's tomb at Naples. It ran parallel to the other threads of legends, and served to invest the locality of Naples with associations of the greatest interest to readers of the poet.

FOURTH—VIRGIL'S BOOK OF MAGIC

I

An ancient tradition, dating from the time of Asconius Pedianus and, perhaps, from that of Virgil himself, concerning the authenticity of which there can be no doubt, gave out that certain passages of the eclogues contained covert allusions to incidents in the poet's own life, and to notable events of his time. This vague report, unaccompanied by any particulars, left the Virgilian interpreters to their own fruitful conjectures and speculations. To what an extreme their ill-disciplined fancy led them was exemplified by the interpolated remark in the commentary attributed to Servius, a grammarian of the fourth century, upon the first eclogue, resolving it into an allegory where Tityrus represented Virgil; the pine tree, Rome; the fountains, Senators or poets, and the groves, the scholars of the schools, while by the words, *Sub tegmine fagi*, the poet was supposed to mean the possessions conferred upon him by Octavianus.

Such a tradition could not be allowed to rest all but forgotten in the midst of the grammatical activity which continued

from Virgil's own times for centuries without intermission. The natural result of the tendency to an undue exaltation of Virgil was a series of new and forced interpretations of the Virgilian poems by which their meaning was extended to take in not only all departments of science as then cultivated, but also a vast deal of the superhuman and impossible. Donatus conceived the order of Virgil's works to be that of human progress from savagery to refinement. Men had first been shepherds; therefore, Maro first composed his bucolics. Then they learned to cultivate the ground, and Virgil likewise followed his earlier poems with a series upon husbandry in the georgics. As men became more numerous, they crowded upon each other. Rivalries increased with civilization, and produced the warlike state of society represented in the Æneid. This allegorizing tendency had already reached such a stage in the fourth century that the whole sixth book of the Æneid was supposed to be based upon astrology. Servius, while aiming to pursue a simple method, which he correctly defined as in opposition to the allegorical mode of interpretation, was nevertheless drawn by the current fashion into fanciful theories as to Virgil's meaning. Writing of the golden branch which Æneas plucked and carried with him into Hades, Servius represented it to mean the letter Upsilon, which in the system of the Pythagoreans was an emblem of human life. The fancy attributed to the poet was that Æneas took with him the virtues as an offering to Proserpine. He described the branch hidden in the depths of a gloomy forest —so the integrity of a good life was hidden in the rank growth of human vices.

This treatment of the poet by the grammarians was not more extravagant than the vagaries of the later rhetoricians

who, led by T. C. Donatus, attributed to Virgil all the virtues and knowledge required of the perfect orator. Whoever passed through the hands of these teachers of grammar and rhetoric learned to look upon Virgil as the type of all that was excellent in every form of literature, containing within himself all the potentialities of science and of culture. In the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, Virgil is glorified as the master of the whole circle of learning. It is the only work of those times, now extant, with the exception of the commentaries, which pretends to treat of Virgil distinctively throughout. Macrobius's pretext was ostensibly a desire to bring together, for the instruction of his son, the results of his extensive and varied reading. By connecting the matter loosely in the way he adopted, he secured the form of a convivial dialogue, and, by making Virgil the central theme of all the discourses, he testified to the eminent place occupied by the poet in all the thought of the times. He aimed at giving his work the air of a critical and impartial discussion upon the merits of the poet, but from the modern point of view he has, in this respect, conspicuously failed. No doubt he was as deeply learned and as acute in criticism as comported with the period of literary decadence to which he belonged. In his dialogue the personages introduced are given the names, and probably the individual opinions, of learned men, his own contemporaries. They are described as with the author devoting the period of their recreation to contemplating the great poet in the highest sphere of his intellectual activity, far removed from the rude conception of him entertained by the vulgar. The ideal of Virgil held up for admiration in the schools was condemned by them as poor, low and inadequate from their point of view, and so it was also from the modern point of view, but for a

totally different reason from that which occurred to Macrobius. Imagining that there was much more in the Virgilian poems than the grammarians, with all their minuteness, had been able to discover, he demanded a deeper insight and a more thorough exploration of meanings that had been left by Virgil purposely in obscurity. In outlining such an investigation, he might have been expected to mark a distinct reaction from the notions of the times which he condemned; but instead of any such reaction, he manifested only a new phase of the tendencies which he deprecated.

In the *Saturnalia* not only is Virgil learned in all directions —he is infallible. Macrobius did not admit, as some other grammarians felt it necessary to do, that errors and defects could be found in the poetry of Virgil. These apparent lapses were due, in his opinion, entirely to the want of capacity or genius in the different readers. The whole work is devoted to demonstrating the immensity of Virgil's hitherto concealed knowledge. To use expressions similar to his own, Macrobius proposed that the infinite number of places in Virgil's works over which the common herd of expositors passed dry-shod —as if what a grammarian assumed to be plain was obvious to every reader—should no longer remain in the depths; but that the proper method of investigation having been discovered, the deepest recesses of the poet's thought should be opened to the veneration of the learned. Of course, it was necessary that the part of a critic adverse to the poet should be represented in the dialogue. This person to whom Macrobius gives the name of Evangelus, is apparently altogether fictitious. He lacks the vigor and personal completeness with which the author succeeded in investing his other characters. He does not embody the opinions of the writers opposed to Virgil

in the age when Macrobius wrote. His prejudices are rather those of the first century, which the advocates of the poet had long since disposed of. The sole duty of Evangelus in the dialogue is to bring out by means of his objections the counter arguments of the other speakers. His presence is barely tolerated by Macrobius and his friends, and his speeches are usually mere quotations from some ancient critic. He finally reaches the point of denying that Virgil, born in an obscure village, could have learned Greek literature. Such an absurdity did not occur to the most bitter detractor in the Augustan age, and Macrobius would perhaps hardly have thought of it, except for its convenience as a pretext to explain the really profound knowledge of Greek literature which Virgil possessed. This is the theme of the entire fifth book, as answering in part an objection of Evangelus, who declares that he can see nothing in Virgil more than simply the poet; that as a poet he has left in his works many errors, and that he himself recognized the lack of merit in his works by his dying request that the Æneid should be burned. Symmachus, on the other hand, maintains that Virgil is not only suitable to the instruction of children, but contains things worthy the attention of mature readers. "The glory of Virgil is such," he adds, "that it can neither be increased by praise nor diminished by censure." To this the other speakers agree, and they then undertake to reply to Evangelus in detail, each taking up a particular department of learning and demonstrating Virgil's perfection in it. Eustathius discussed the poet's proficiency in astrology and philosophy and his acquaintance with Greek literature; Flavian and Vettius, his acquaintance with the sacred science of the Romans; Symmachus, his ability as a rhetorician; Eusebius, his knowledge

as an orator; Furius Albinus, his familiarity with the older Latin writers, and Cecina Albinus, his propriety in the use of words, while Servius descanted upon difficult places in the poems. The discourse of Eustathius upon Virgil as an astrologer and philosopher, the part of all the rest most likely to have been valuable to modern scholars, is unfortunately not in existence. That it was of a Neo-Platonic cast is to be inferred from a remark in Macrobius's exposition of the Dream of Scipio, which recognizes in the *Terque, quaterque beati* of Virgil the Pythagorean doctrine of numbers. The original Eustathius, from whom Macrobius drew the character of his dialogue, was notable for his eagerness in the study of marvelous things. It was he who, explaining the origin of the palladium of Troy, related that it was made and endued with marvellous properties by a philosopher who lived at Troy previous to the war with the Greeks, a legend similar in its make-up to some in which the name of Virgil figured.

II

The tendency manifested by Macrobius to discover every sort of hidden wisdom in Virgil's poems was characteristic as well of subsequent writers throughout a period of several centuries. Few traces of the pagan allegorical interpretations remain, but the fragmentary testimony shows that he was considered not only a poet but a profound philosopher. It is hardly to be doubted that the more salient features of the earliest allegories were reflected in the work of the Christian Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, who probably wrote before the middle of the sixth century. The *De Continentia Virgiliana* is one of the most remarkable writings that have survived

from the Latin mediæval times; and it is also a most valuable memorial of the fame retained by Virgil even in an age of barbarism. In his introduction Fulgentius explains that he restricted himself to the Æneid because the shorter poems concealed mysteries too profound for him to hope to penetrate them. He was of the opinion, however, that the first georgic was devoted to astrology, the second to medicine and physiognomy, the third to augury and sacred science, the fourth to music and to the influence of the stars on human destiny. In the first, second and third eclogues was given the content of the three great divisions of human life in the terms of nature, while the fourth took up the art of prophecy. Leaving these abstruse matters for something which he pretended to understand, he besought the muses to grant him a vision of the spirit of Virgil. They acceded to his request. The spectre appeared sitting in an attitude of serious meditation, as if contemplating some new poetical work. Fulgentius humbly prayed the poet to descend from his lofty seat and reveal to him the mysteries of his poems—not those which were most difficult, but those within the comprehension of a poor and barbarous mind. The spectre consented; not, however, without a terrifying frown. His own greatness he emphasized by persistently addressing his interlocutor as the mannikin (*homunculus*), and by his grandiloquent manner of speaking. By way of preface, the spirit remarked that the design of the Æneid, as a whole, was to reflect the entire course of human life. Upon being asked to explain this philosophic purpose more particularly, he defined the three important words of the first verse, *arma*, *virum* and *primus*, as emblematic of the three gradations existing in human life. The first of these was to have; the second, to rule what is possessed, and the third, to

adorn that which is ruled. *Arma*, that is, courage, referred to the corporeal substance; *virum*, that is, wisdom, referred to the intellectual substance; *primus*, that is, the prince, referred to the adorning substance. Thus in the semblance of a tale were described the normal conditions of human life—first nature, then learning and lastly happiness.

With this preface the spectre of Virgil began an exposition in detail of each successive book of the Æneid. But he gave his listener no little trouble. He required a promise that his mysteries should not be exposed to dull and uncultured minds. As if doubtful whether Fulgentius himself was not merely pretending to an acquaintance with the Æneid, he demanded a recital of the narrative given in the first book. Reassured by the manner in which his request was complied with, the shade explained that the story of the shipwreck signified the birth of man who enters life with pain and grief and crying. Juno, who caused the disaster, was the goddess of childbirth, and Eolus, who served her, symbolized destruction. The song of Iopas was the cradle song of the nurse. The incidents of the second and third books all referred to infancy with its love of the marvellous and its eagerness to hear fabulous tales. A special symbol of infancy was the cyclops with the single eye in the middle of his forehead, signifying the immature and changeable mind of the babe, overpowered by the wisdom of old age typified in Ulysses. The period of infancy closed with the death and funeral of Father Anchises that is, with the release from parental control. In the first enjoyment of his freedom the youth seeks eagerly after pleasures, delighting especially in those which are unlawful, and for this reason Virgil described at length the unfortunate passion of Dido. From this tempest of the mind youth was saved by the

admonitions of Mercury, who typified intellectual power. The funeral pyre of Dido signified the destruction of youthful lust in its own flame. At the turning point of life man, of whom Æneas was the type, recalled the paternal memory, and, in the funeral games in honor of Anchises, gave himself to noble exercises. The burning of the ships represented the destruction of all those things which had hitherto caused the mind to err. Having thus separated himself from evil tendencies that had caused him to wander, man thenceforth sought wisdom, or, to speak more poetically and more plainly, Æneas journeyed to the temple of Apollo. After having been freed from hallucination in the death of Palinurus, and buried vain glory in the person of Misenus, man, armed with the golden branch of wisdom, which opened the secrets of buried truth, began his journey of philosophic investigation, described under the fiction of the descent into Hades. First of all were revealed to him the ills of human life in their sad aspects. Guided by Time, that is, Charon, he crossed the turbid and agitated waves of juvenile life; heard, in the barking of Cerberus, the confused quarrels of men among themselves, and learned how to obtain the sweets of wisdom. Then he proceeded to a knowledge of the future life, after meditating upon the passions and affections of his youth, or, as the Æneid has it, contemplated the shades of Dido and Anchises, and learned the nature of the rewards and punishments with which good and evil deeds are requited. Made wise by these revelations, man was freed from the rule of a preceptor in the death and funeral of the nurse, Cajeta, and joined the beloved Ausonia, or, in other words, became one of the good. He chose as his consort Lavinia, the embodiment of the weariness and the disputes of age; but took for his counsellor the good

man, Evander, (Euandros) in whose conversation he learned of the victory of good over evil, that is, of Hercules over Cacus. Obtaining suitable armor for his ardent soul from Vulcan, he undertook the struggle against madness, who, guided first by drunkenness (typified by Metiscus) and afterwards by obstinacy (whose poetical name was Juturna, equivalent in derivation to Diuturna), was accompanied and aided by impiety (for which Mezentius was but another name) and unreason (in the person of Messapus.) Wisdom finally conquered, as allegorically shown in the victory of the Trojans over the Latins.

The tendency to describe the course of human life, and the contests between good and evil, between virtue and vice, by an allegory, was one that ran parallel to the popular taste. It was as agreeable to the readers of Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, and Aldhelm's *De Octo Principalibus Vitiis* as to those who have delighted in the poem of Spenser or the unrivalled narrative of Bunyan. Naturally, the Virgilian allegory of Fulgentius retained the attention of many generations of readers. The strained interpretation was well suited to the loquacious minuteness of scholasticism. It is an important fact in the consideration of the Virgilian legends that the disposition to convert the Æneid into an allegory recurred at the same mediæval epoch in which the legends came to the surface in literature, and when, also, the romantic spirit had transmuted the Roman epic into a legendary tale. If Fulgentius's work were alone sufficient for a generalization, it could be shown that in the sixth century, Virgil, both as to his works and his appearance, had taken on much of the quality which is characterized by the term legendary. The very same spirit which actuated Neckam in relating the miraculous tales which

he had heard concerning Virgil, led John of Salisbury to construct his theory upon the philosophic purpose of the Æneid. In contrast with Fulgentius he limited the allegory of human life to the first six books of the poem. The name Æneas according to his notions of etymology was nothing but a symbolic word to describe the human soul; and he coined the Greek term *ennaios*, indweller, to support this definition. With this beginning he was able to show to his own satisfaction that the first book of the poem related to the perils and vicissitudes of infancy; that the second described the growth and ingenuous curiosity of childhood, equally eager to see and to hear all things, whether true or false; the third, boyhood with its errors; the fourth, youth and the illicit pleasures in which it delights; the fifth, virile maturity and the approach of age, and finally the sixth pictured old age with the loss of vitality, the cooling of the passions and the advance of decrepitude. Bernard of Chartres in his commentary on Virgil enforced a similar idea. There were not wanting those who conceived the three styles of Virgil, the bucolic, the georgic and the epic, to be typical of the three psychological categories of human life: the eclogues, symbolizing the contemplative life; the georgics, the sensuous; and the Æneid, the life of activity. Virgil was but one among those whose works suffered from these imputed meanings. Not a book, not an historical narration, nor a tale of fiction, but was thought capable of philosophic or moral explanation. The doctrine was commonly taught that all literature had four meanings—the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the analogical. Men's minds were preocupied with a category of ideas, the images of which they sought in everything. Even

Dante was not superior to his times in this respect.* In the *Convito* he calls to mind "the allegory of the ages of man which Virgil imagined in the Æneid"; and afterward, in the same book, explains the figurative sense of the Æneid in a manner little different from that of Salisbury.

III

Out of this apotheosis of Virgil and his works the more ignorant romancers and trouveres could gain but one idea. The Æneid, as they knew it in the versions of poets only less ignorant than themselves, would not tally in any respect with the schemes of the philosophers. But Virgil must have written a book to warrant the fame accorded him as a man of superhuman wisdom and infinite knowledge. From that point the development of a legend relating to a book of magic or necromancy, alleged to have been composed by Virgil,

*Witness his extraordinary comment on a passage in Lucan's *Pharsalia;* (see *The Banquet of Dante Alighieri*, translated by Elizabeth Price Sayer, Fourth Treatise, chap. xxviii.): "And that these two things are suitable to this [old] age, that great poet Lucan represents to us in the second book of his *Pharsalia*, when he says that Marcia returned to Cato and entreated him that he would take her back in his fourth and extreme old age, by which Marcia, the Noble Soul, is meant, and we can thus depict the symbol of it in all truth; Marcia was a virgin, and in that state typified Adolescence; she then espoused Cato, and in that state typified Youth; she then bore sons, by whom are typified the Virtues which are becoming to young men; and she departed from Cato and espoused Hortensius, by which it is typified that she quitted Youth and came to Old Age. She bore sons to this man also, by whom are typified the Virtues which befit Old Age. Hortensius died, by which is typified the end of Old Age, and Marcia made a widow, by which widowhood is typified Extreme Old Age, returned in the early days of her widowhood to Cato, wherby is typified the Noble Soul turning to God in the beginning of Extreme Old Age."

would be as obvious and easy as any detail of fiction could be. Returning to the *Dolopathos* we find that Virgil is represented as having written a little work embodying the substance of all the books of philosophy for the use of his pupil Lucimien. It was a volume so small that it could easily be carried in the hand, yet it contained all the principles of the seven arts, but especially those of *Estronomie*, by which Herbers means nothing less than the astrology which was attributed to Virgil by Macrobius and Fulgentius, subject, of course, to the change which the pretended science of divination by the stars had undergone during the intervening centuries. That the science of astronomy as described in this romance was merely divination is shown by the use which Lucimien made of the book. After he had thoroughly mastered the art, he took advantage of the absence of Virgil one evening to try his learning. He discovered that his mother, the wife of Dolopathos, was dead, and that the old king had married again. He foresaw also by the aid of the stars that he would soon be summoned home. On another occasion, by watching the course of the stars in accordance with Virgil's instructions, he had been enabled to foresee the plot of some envious persons to poison the master. It is by the principles of the same art, called in another place *secrez de divinite*, that Virgil discovers the peril which his pupil will encounter upon his return to his father's court, and is led to enforce upon him an oath to keep inviolable silence until they shall see each other again, thus bringing the story to a point of similarity with the ordinary versions of the Seven Wise Men. The fate of Virgil's book is a notable incident in the romance. After Lucimien has passed through the dangerous adventure with his young and beautiful stepmother—a sufficiently pointed reminder of the disagreement between

Joseph and Potiphar's wife; after the sages have succcessively related the tales with which the action of the story is delayed; after the life of Lucimien has been saved and his stepmother has been burned, through the timely arrival of Virgil; and, after his coronation as King of Sicily, an account is given of the death of the master. When Virgil's last moments came he clasped the book of *nigromance*—of which, remarks the poet, he knew the whole science—so tightly in his hand that it could not be released. That this supposititious work of Virgil should have become a work on necromancy in the conclusion of Herbers's poem, when it had been in the first place merely a compendium of the seven arts, is a significant fact in the history of the Virgilian myth, since it indicates that only a few years were required for the development of the superstition.

Some light is thrown upon the growth of this legend by two curious fragments of history contemporaneous with the production of the *Dolopathos*. John of Salisbury in his *Polycraticus*, dedicated to Thomas a Becket, about 1170, apparently in answer to an inquiry mentions the exploits of a person, whom he calls a Stoic, who had long busied himself at Naples, in the effort to secure the relics of Virgil from the sepulchre in which they reposed. In the useless enterprise of obtaining the bones of the poet, rather than his wisdom, to carry with him back to Gaul, this lunatic had passed many sleepless nights, had endured hunger and expended his strength in the most wearisome bodily toil. In all this there was not a hint of occult science, Salisbury's phrase being *ossa quam sensum*, not *artem*, nor *magicam*, nor *mathematicam*. A generation later Gervase of Tilbury, apparently unaware of Salisbury's anecdote, found a tradition that when Roger reigned in Sicily a learned Englishman presented himself at

court, beseeching the royal favor. The king promised to grant any reasonable request, supposing that he had merely to deal with a needy scholar. A learned man he certainly was, remarks Gervase, because he showed himself thoroughly expert in all the mysteries of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and deeply read in natural science and astronomy. His answer to the king was that he asked no ephemeral gifts, but desired what would seem to other men a very small matter, the privilege of taking possession of Virgil's remains, providing he could find them within the boundaries of Roger's kingdom. To this eccentric request the king consented, and the learned traveller, carrying a letter subscribed with the royal sign manual, hastened to Naples, a city where Virgil had left many proofs of his extraordinary knowledge. When the letter was presented to the Neapolitans, they, in ignorance of the locality where Virgil was buried, easily agreed to obey a command, which, as they thought, would have a totally nugatory result. The stranger labored long, just as Salisbury said his Stoic did; but finally, guided by his art, discovered the tomb he sought, in the very centre of a mountain which was solid on all sides, unbroken even by the smallest fissure. An excavation was made and with wearisome toil, the sepulchre was reached. The body of Virgil was found entire, but it crumbled to dust immediately. Under the head of the corpse was a book on the subject of the *ars notoria* with the explanation necessary for mastering the science. These were all carried away, the bones, the dust and the mysterious volume. But the Neapolitans recalling to mind the affection which Virgil had cherished toward their city, and fearing that their own folly would bring upon the city some terrible calamity, decided to revoke their former action and to disobey the commands of the

king. For, they reasoned, if Virgil's bones had not been of the greatest importance to the city, he would not at his death have taken such pains to conceal his sepulchre. The Duke of the Neapolitans, with the aid of a great concourse of citizens, recovered the bones by force, and, placing them in a sack, carried them into the castle of the sea, where afterward those who wished to see them were shown certain jointed pieces of iron. The Englishman, upon being interrogated as to his purpose in obtaining these relics, replied that he hoped by a process of conjuring to obtain a complete knowledge of the arts of Virgil, and added that he was satisfied to have had the bones under his care for a single day. In the struggle for the possession of the book the stranger was deprived of a portion of it. This recaptured fragment was religiously preserved at Naples, and Gervase had the effrontery to annex to his narrative the statement that the mutilated leaves were perused by him, through the kindness of his friend, Cardinal Joannes, and subjected to the proper tests with the most conclusive success. The phrase *ars notoria* which Gervase used is one of those delicate circumlocutions by which he and other scientific men of his times described processes allied to magic.

IV

With the French romancers generally the book was supposed to have been a compact and brief exposition of the seven arts. The author of *L'Image du Monde*, a poem written about the middle of the thirteenth century, evidently obtained his notions respecting it directly from the *Dolopathos*, for he remarked that it was written by Virgil for the use of one of his pupils, the son of a king of Sicily. According to him, a

diligent student by means of this abstract could master all the arts in the space of three years. Among the Germans, who lacked that traditional respect for Virgil's name which was cherished by the Latin races, and who, moreover, as has been noted in the case of Conrad of Querfurt, felt no hesitation in calling the forbidden arts by their right names, the book became at once a repertory of diabolical wisdom, degenerating at last into a mere receptacle for the magician's familiar spirits. In the *Wartburg krieg* it was said to have been, not Virgil's own composition, but a work stolen from the cell of the ancient magician Zabulon. Von Muglin, in his *Weltbuch*, a versified history of the world, written at Vienna, about 1250, to which allusion has already been made, had Virgil find it under a corpse. The Italians, who were slow to accept the tale in any form, gave no indication that they were acquainted with it until Bartolomeo Carracciolo compiled his *Cronica di Partenope*, a legendary history of Naples, late in the fourteenth century. This author repeated the story given by Gervase, and then added the explanation that the book was not Virgil's own, but had been found by him in a cavern beneath Monte Barbaro, near Naples. Virgil, in company with one Philomelus, made a search for the sepulchre of Chiron, and, upon finding it, obtained the manuscript. The Chiron, with whose name that of Virgil is thus connected, was probably meant for the centaur of that name, who figured in the mythic period of the history of medicine. A book attributed to him under the title of the *Herbarium of Apuleius, the Platonist, translated from the original Greek of Chiron, the Centaur*, was widely known in the middle ages. Philomelus is, perhaps, to be identified with the ancient physician Philomenus, who gave his name to some useless remedies of a magical character; the appellation sounds,

however, suspiciously like an allegorical allusion to Virgil's poetical gifts. It is probable that this story, which Carracciolo claimed to have found in an ancient chronicle, was a pure invention in behalf of some empirical treatise, written by a precursor of such quacks as Cardan and Paracelsus, in which advantage was taken of the popular Neapolitan belief that Monte Barbaro contained all sorts of treasures and miraculous things. Conrad of Querfurt mentioned this popular opinion as common when he was at Naples early in the thirteenth century. The title of the book which Virgil thus obtained was *De Necromancia*, but Carracciolo, true to the classical traditions of his country, accepted this phrase as meaning only the knowledge of planetary influence upon human affairs.

V

As in the case of Paracelsus and others, the superstition as to Virgil's knowledge and as to the book in which he had recorded it led finally to the composition of a book of magic in his name. It was entitled *Virgilii Cordubensis Philosophia.* While it contained no allusion to the common legends concerning Virgil, it was closely linked to them by the spirit which animated its anonymous author, who, appropriating the name of Virgil, pretended that he was an Arabian philosopher, and that his works were originally composed in the Arabic language. These had been translated into Latin at Cordova, in 1290. Certainly the author could not have been an Arabian, nor could he have been acquainted to any extent with Moorish learning, otherwise he would never have given the name of Virgil to a man of that race. In fact, he could not have possessed any learning worthy of the name, for he

made Virgil a contemporary at Cordova of such widely separated names as Seneca, Avicenna, Averrhoes, and Alguazil. He was manifestly an ignorant pretender, who aimed to give his book authority by connecting it with a name of legendary importance on the one hand, and on the other with the specious reputation of the Moors in science. By way of introducing his work, the author related how all the studious men who sought Toledo as the centre of instruction saw the necessity of obtaining his services as a teacher, as soon as they heard of his intimate acquaintance with every secret and abstruse avenue of learning. His exceptional knowledge had been obtained by means of that universal science which others called necromancy, but to which he preferred to give the name of *Refulgentia*. They sent a humble request that he would come to Toledo as a lecturer, but he refused, because of a reluctance to quit his native city of Cordova. Thereupon, they took him by force and placed him in the chair of magic, or all-science, at their university, a professorship not unknown during the middle ages in the schools of Spain. From this preface it is obvious that in general literary history the book should be classed with that pestilent succession of works supposed to contain the whole substance of what is knowable, the golden keys, royal methods, Parnassian graduses, the macro-micro-cosmical oceans that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, disgraced the name of learning.

The introduction was followed by grave discussions upon the subjects of the First Cause, the human mind, the universe, enlightened by the important communications which Professor Virgil made to his audience of philosophers upon the authority of the spirits whom he had consulted. He explained the nature of these spirits and elucidated the principles of the *ars notoria*

which, according to him, was a holy and perfect science, those only who understood it being without sin. The authors of this science were the good angels who communicated it to King Solomon. They enclosed all the spirits in a bottle save one, a lame devil, who escaped and subsequently released all his companions. When Alexander visited Jerusalem, he was accompanied by his master, Aristotle, who was then a person of very rough, uncouth manners. But he happened to discover the place where the books were concealed which Solomon wrote. He obtained them, and by study became the great man revered in later ages. Those who have read the book say that it is full of grammatical blunders. Its philosophy is a medley in which are to be recognized fragments of Judaism and rabbinism, mingled with Christian doctrines, one of which is the dogma of the Trinity. Of Virgil there is properly nothing but the name. The reason for the forgery is plainly the tradition endowing Virgil with a superhuman wisdom, exactly as the gradual corruption of grammatical study led to the composition of a text book in his name upon that science.

FIFTH—VIRGIL, THE MAN OF SCIENCE

I

Educated people at Mantua must have recognized Virgil's genius while he was yet a young suburban resident at Andes, otherwise it is impossible to account for the efforts of Pollio and Gallus in his behalf. But to the neighboring peasantry his studious habits and his retirement must have seemed the mark of an indolent, shiftless nature. When the confiscations were in progress and all the people of the district were evicted with the alternative of starvation or exile, the youthful poet came near losing his life at the hands of the veteran who had seized his farm. It must have seemed extraordinary to his poor compatriots that these cruelties inflicted by the soldiers of the victor at Philippi should have been followed almost immediately in Virgil's case by extraordinary favors from Octavian's own hand. To their rude minds the real cause of Virgil's advancement would not easily have suggested itself, save in connection with something which gave it an air of utility. Now, one of the circumstances which conferred a superstitious value upon poetry among the ancients was its supposed relation to medicine. Songs and chants that would

now be considered mere futile magical triflings were once a legitimate element in the curative art. The particulars of this ancient practice which was supported even by the authority of Galen, and was applied in such widely divergent forms of disease as epilepsy and sciatica, madness and pestilential contagions, are so well known that it is unnecessary to recite them in this place. It is, however, quite probable that this superstition, having its cause in the actual theories of medical science, was in its turn the main reason for attributing the character of a physician to many an ancient poet, as in the case of Orpheus, Musæus, Homer, Hesiod, Aratus, Eudemus, Alcæus, Ptolemæus, Cytherius, Democrates, Nicander, Æmilius Macer, Silius Italicus, Petronius and Ausonius. That proficiency in medicine was attributed to Virgil by tradition is well known. As in the case of Homer —and, in modern times, of Shakespeare—Virgil's works were ransacked by the devotees of every special science in search of quotations which were adduced to prove that in each, as in all, he had been an adept. The selections which were supposed to indicate that he had a professional knowledge of medicine would, of themselves, make a respectable pamphlet. The third georgic was cited particularly on account of the graphic account it gave of diseases proper to the domestic animals and to the methods by which they were cured; and it must be allowed that Virgil displayed a knowledge that could only have been attained by careful observation and much experience. The commentary attributed to Servius, either by the original work of that author, or by the emendations of his mediæval successors, was copious in its allusions to Virgil's knowledge of medicine. To this tradition respecting the poet the greater

number of anecdotes told of him in his legendary aspect are directly related.

II

Aulus Gellius, who wrote in the second century, mentioned, among the other criticisms which he had to make upon the text of Virgil, that the line which now reads, *Ora jugo, et vacuis Clanius non æquus Acerris*, formerly began with *Nola*, the name of an ancient city in the Campagna, beyond Vesuvius, from Naples. This statement was made on the authority of a commentator belonging to the first century. Virgil was said to have made the change in his verse because of the lack of courtesy which the inhabitants of Nola manifested to him in refusing a privilege which he had asked as the owner of an estate in the neighborhood. The fact that Virgil once had a place near Nola and the village of Avella was commemorated by the people who gave to the hill now known as Monte Vergine the name of Mons Virgilii, the locality of which corresponds exactly to the allusion of Gellius. In Latin writings of both mediæval and modern times, the hill is described under the various names of *Mons Virginum*, *Mons Virginis*, *Mons Virgilianus*. Of these, the last given was at first universal, as is shown by documents of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Pope Celestinus in a bull issued in 1197, relative to the monastery there, spoke of it as the monastery of the Holy Virgin Mary, on the Mount of Virgil. In the biography of St. William of Vercelli, the founder of the monastery, its site is described by the same name exclusive of all the others. Tradition and usage thus connect with events of the poet's life a legend

which Neckam alluded to when he spoke of the garden of Virgil surrounded by an immovable and impenetrable atmosphere. There are some circumstances belonging to history which indicate that it was a very easy corruption of speech for the Neapolitans to say Virginius, Virginis or Virginum for Virgilius. According to the biography which is known under the name of Donatus, the ancient inhabitants of the city translated the name of the poet by the Greek colloquialism *Parthenias*, thus showing that they quite mistook its meaning, or else that the letters l and n in certain combinations were not readily distinguished by them. A defect in this respect is not so uncommon with individuals that it might not characterize a whole population. Another example of the same confusion occurred at a much later date. Seneca, in the sixth book of his *Problems of Nature*, at the beginning, spoke of an earthquake, which, in the consulate of Regulus and Virginius, desolated the Campagna. Of all the cities of the region Naples only escaped. In this passage the name Virginius was read as equivalent to Virgilius and thus the opinion was deduced that Virgil was consul not of the Roman commonwealth, but in Naples at the time of the great earthquake. In the collection of mediæval legends concerning the monastery of Monte Vergine written by the Abbot Giordano, in 1649, it is stated that Virgil, upon taking up his residence at Naples, was appointed consul with Regulus as his colleague, and Seneca's historical paragraph is cited as proof. To the romancers and legend makers of Western Europe the name Mt. Virgil suggested the outline of their invention, to the perfecting of which more than one man contributed. Helinand, the son of a Flemish nobleman, after wandering as a trouvere, became a monk and wrote a chronicle stuffed with

fables and prodigies. He described, among other things, the Virgilian garden, adding to the particulars which Neckam had mentioned that no rain fell within the charmed precincts. Gervase of Tilbury followed with his *Otia Imperialia*, dedicated to his sovereign, Otto IV. Gervase was the chancellor to this emperor, and had travelled much in Italy. According to him Virgil's garden lay on the slope of *Mons Virginum*. It was planted with many kinds of herbs, among the rest one called the herb of Lucius, which restored blind sheep to sight. In the *Image du Monde* the garden is mentioned as having no protection save the wall of air. Caracciolo, going back to the story of Gervase, amplified it in accordance with the tradition of Virgil's medical acquirements. The garden was placed by him near Avella and Merchiolana, and was supplied with medicinal plants from all parts of the world, besides some which grew in no other place except where Virgil had planted them. Virgil prepared this garden because of his anxiety to provide in every way against the evils and infirmities to which humanity was subject.

The same tradition was the probable source of the elaborate legend respecting the origin of the medicinal baths at Baiæ and Pozzuoli, which, in its simplest form, was recorded by Helinand, Conrad of Querfurt and Gervase. Conrad ostensibly drew his knowledge that these baths were due to Virgil's skill from some earlier authors, whom he alludes to but does not name; but Gervase, writing as though from his own knowledge, describes the springs at Pozzuoli as having been created by Virgil for the benefit of the people and for a perpetual wonder. Over each fountain Virgil placed an inscription giving the names of the diseases to the cure of which it was adapted. But in more recent times, after the rise of

the medical school at Salerno, the physicians became jealous of the posthumous practice of Virgil which decreased their emoluments, and surreptitiously defaced the inscriptions. This story as given by Gervase was repeated in the *Roman de Cleomades*, a French poem written by Adenez Li Rois toward the close of the thirteenth century—so that it was then popularly known throughout Europe—and later in the *Cronica di Partenope*, where the opportunity was seized to deliver a sharp invective against the inhumanity and wickedness of the Salernian doctors. The inscriptions and the pictures accompanying them, wrote Caracciolo, were all destroyed by these uncharitable physicians, who crossed the bay of Naples at night to carry out their nefarious plans. But divine Providence, while it did not interfere with their stratagems, punished them on their return by wrecking their boat in a tempest, leaving but one of their number alive to tell the tale.

III

To be a proficient in medicine in the middle ages was to be suspected of an acquaintance with all the natural sciences, and to suffer from the superstitious regard in which these were held. It is not surprising, then, that Vincent of Beauveis—who in his *Mirror of History* reproduced the legends concerning Virgil, which Helinand had collated or invented—in his *Mirror of Nature* should have presented his readers with some legendary information such as no other author had thought of. When he came to the subject of alchemy in the eighty-seventh chapter of the ~~eighth~~ seventh book,* he introduced into it a list of the

* This is the only passage found by the author of these essays that had a bearing on the legendary history of Virgil, and yet had escaped the scrutiny of Comparetti.

ancient masters who had practiced the art. The name of Virgil is associated with the names of Adam, Noah, Korah, Moses, Aristotle, Alexander, Geber, Ahimazar and John the Evangelist. The tendency to invest Virgil with the attribute of omniscience was the same shown in Macrobius, but it was modified by new views as to the nature of things. The Platonic idealism had given way to a gross, unformed materialism confused and stupefied by the multitude of its own discoveries, unable to reduce them to any system, and incapable of generalizing upon them. To scholars of this new order the leader of Roman literature appeared as the Master of Sciences, the ideal of learning, and, therefore, the human symbol of superhuman mystery and power. If we would see him as they saw him, we must picture him in his cell, hewn out of the solid rock in a single night protected by his wisdom against insidious treachery as well as open enmity; with his lamp and his crucible beside him, the materials of his investigation and experiment scattered about him, and the manuscripts which guided his researches open under his eye. We shall then have the highest conception possible in the thirteenth century of the scholar, whether he were poet or teacher, philosopher or scientist; and, therefore, the most appropriate conception of an eminent genius. The classical period seemed to these mediæval writers a period when learning flourished, and when even the fables of mythology had been realized in the actual experience of mankind. This impression converted every country that had a share in the classic life into a land of enchantment. Travellers from England and Germany, like Gervase of Tilbury and Conrad of Querfurt, misled by this preconception, revived all the tales of antiquity and sought to identify them with the strange objects which met their gaze.

This tendency is clearly evinced in the letters of Conrad, priest, politician and archæologist, who combined the curiosity of a traveller with the labors of an imperial ambassador. At the time of his visit to Naples, he was chancellor to the Emperor Henry VI., and accompanied the army which besieged and captured the city of Naples. His classical reminiscences did not prevent him from carrying out strictly the orders of his master to raze the walls of the city. He mentioned the Virgilian legends in a letter to the Abbot of Hildesheim, and it was in this letter that he indulged his imagination over the relics of antiquity which he discovered. It would never be supposed, save for the writings of this bishop that was to be, that one could find within the boundaries of Italy, Olympus and Parnassus and Hippocrene, Scylla and Charybdis; *Scirrhus* (an island where Thetis watched over the hidden Achilles) and the ruins of the labyrinth of the Minotaur. In this congeries of geographical blundering, the things to be observed are the reverence for the antique and the curiosity respecting the works of ancient times, for these point unmistakably not only to the occasion but to the source of the greater number of legends about Virgil.

IV

Before proceeding with the different versions of the legends whose character has already been hinted at in the quotations from Neckam, it will be well to bring together those classical superstitions which probably constituted the material worked over in the minds of trouveres like Helinand, scientists like Neckam and educated travelers like Gervase and Conrad. A mass of folk-lore might be accumulated having a more or less

direct bearing upon the subject, but two examples will suffice to show how the popular beliefs of the ancient world have survived all the changes of the ages, even down to our own times. Pliny records, as common opinions in his day, and as facts of science, that the bird known as the cuckoo was merely a kind of hawk, and that olive trees became barren if a she goat rubbed against their trunks. These opinions, both false, are implicitly believed by the French peasantry at the present day. If in such trifling matters races, related to each other, have persisted in error for nearly two thousand years, then no surprise should be felt at the recurrence of antique popular errors at any intervening period in European history. Now turn to Pliny's Natural History. Among the facts which he recorded as indisputable was this that, under certain conditions, flesh could not become putrid, even though none of the usual precautions was taken with it. He alluded to a rain of fresh meat which took place at Rome in the consulship of P. Volumnius and Servius Sulpicius, where the most remarkable circumstance was that putrefaction did not occur. At Nea, a town in Troas, he observed that the remains of animals sacrificed before the statue of Minerva remained untainted for an indefiuite length of time. Certain places, also, were mysteriously obnoxious to certain animals. For example, among the islands in the Western Mediterranean was that of Ebusus, in which no serpents could exist, though it was only a little way from another island completely overrun by these creatures. The latter island was avoided by the rabbits that swarmed upon the Baleares, not far away. Wolves could not exist on Mt. Olympus in Macedonia. All venomous, injurious animals, with the single exception of a small spider, perished outright in Crete. The shrew mouse of Italy could not cross a wagon

road from one field to another, because the rut caused by a wheel was fatal to it. In the island of Poroselene the weasels dared not cross a certain road. The swallows, because of the crime committed by Tereus, King of Thrace, could never be induced to frequent the capital of that country. The soil of Gaulos and Galata, islands near Carthage, was fatal to scorpions. The birds on the island in the Euxine, where the tomb of Achilles was, never ventured to enter the temple consecrated to him. So at Rome the temple of Hercules in the Forum Boarium, was free from the presence of either flies or dogs. The sacrifice, at the Olympic games, of a bull in honor of the god known as the Fly-catcher, caused the immediate departure of the winged insects in a swarm. On the other hand Pliny cited also a number of cases where the human inhabitants of certain places had been driven away or exterminated by small animals and by insects. He remarked that in some localities it never rained; for example, the sacred ground upon which the statue of Minerva was placed at Nea, and the vicinity of the temple dedicated to Venus at Paphos. A thing which he was not convinced of himself, but gave as a common belief, was that serpents were specially sensitive to incantations, and could even be collected in a given spot by magical formulæ.*

*The ancients held, among other opinions, that to be born under a certain constellation was to be proof against the poison of serpents. Thus Manilius [*De Astrologia*, translated by T——; London, 1647, Book V., xxiii.] says:

> When Ophieucus mounts and joins the Goat,
> Those that are born shall live an antidote
> To strongest Poyson; they may safely take
> The frightful serpent, and the venomous Snake
> Into their Bosom; whilst the monsters cling
> About their bodies, kils their fiercest sting.

And in Book I., as the translator puts it, one may "Burst snakes with charms."

In his historical account of magic he mentioned as a fact the legend that the philosopher Democritus obtained the books of Dardanus, the magician, from his tomb, and used them in the composition of new works on the subject.

Nearly all the passages of Pliny here cited involved those ideas on the subject of natural science which made the theory of magic possible, and the very problems were presented which in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were supposed to be solved by means of the marvelous legends concerning the magicians. Pliny attributed all the wonders he relates to the divine power of nature, but his epicureanism could not be accepted by the mediæval Christians. The power of a statue of Hercules over flies, or of the Paphian Venus over the elements, if not denied, was allowed as a fact in magical science. Such miracles were the common theme of popular lore. In the historical epitome attributed to Ampelius, a work probably of the sixth century, allusion is made to a statue of Diana at Rhodes upon which no rain ever fell, and the inextinguishable lamp of mediæval legend has its counterpart in the candelabrum of the shrine of Venus at Argyrus, which, though it stood in the open air, shone continuously through tempests as well as fair weather. Another wonder mentioned in this epitome was a bronze statue of the Nile at the city of Agartus, which frightened wild beasts from the neighborhood. It appears also that even in early times bridges of great size were supposed to have been the work of enchanters, a remarkable structure of the kind in Epirus being credited to Medea. A still more extraordinary story in its relation to the magical legends subsequently connected with Virgil's name was that related by the post-classical writer, Olympiodorus, concerning a statue over against Mt. Ætna in Sicily, which effectually

restrained the eruptions of the volcano. This statue served other purposes, also. One leg was a fountain of pure water, while from the other rose an inextinguishable flame..

V

Pliny frequently mentioned amulets, and sometimes the objects he described as possessing unusual power might have answered to the mediæval talisman. The difference was that he looked upon such things, where he believed in them at all, as exponents of the mysterious powers of nature, while the later science, not a whit more credulous or more absurd, viewed them as the work of intelligences, human or otherwise, that had obtained dominion over nature. The logical outcome of Pliny's philosophy would have been a backward movement on the part of mankind; the historical result of the mediæval tendency has been the progress of invention and of the useful arts. That man should pass from the conception of himself as subject to nature, onward to a conception of himself as capable of subduing the forces of the universe to his own use was an absolute necessity in the history of thought. His blind groping after new principles and new methods, such as would make a synthesis of material facts possible, brought him early to adopt such theories as that of talismans. It would be a rash thing to say that these theories have been wholly abandoned at the present day, even in the most enlightened countries of the world. They form the substance of many popular errors, and an inherited preference for them gives universal interest to an incredible species of fiction. The stories finally connected with the name of Virgil were the common coin of the story tellers, with which they purchased

a welcome wherever they went throughout Europe. If auditors wearied of one hero, it was an easy matter to substitute a new name, and thus enliven the well-tried narrative. In effect these stories were like blank forms of legal documents which only required a word here and there to fit them for a great variety of uses. Virgil's name was simply one of those accidental strokes, out of many failures that were forgotten, which hit the popular fancy. It was the same with Apollonius of Tyana, to whom certain monuments at Constantinople were attributed. Thus the famous bronze, supposed to have been the column which was brought from Delphi, where it supported the tripod dedicated to Apollo by the victorious Greeks at the close of the Persian war, was long believed to be a talisman. The tripod vanished long ago, and the three serpents twisted together to form the column have suffered much. All the heads are gone; Mohammed II. is said to have broken one with his mace. The legend clung for all to the noble residue of this wonderful relic. In 1216 the column was still intact, and was then surmounted by a figure said to have been that of an eagle with a serpent in its talons. In the lifetime of Apollonius the city was visited with a plague of serpents—so ran the legend—and he raised this serpentine emblem. In their joy at being relieved from the venomous pests, the people gave to Apollonius the name of The Wise. It was related also that Apollonius, by means of other bronze images, banished flies, gnats and scorpions from Constantinople. Similar tales were told of some mediæval worthies, as Gregory of Tours at Paris; Bernard of Clairvaux, Goffried, and Patrick of Ireland. The opinion at the bottom of all these legends was adopted in the church which had its official services for the expulsion of noxious animals from any

place which they infested.* In the cities that possessed relics of ancient plastic art, it was easy to find images appropriate to the various magical legends, and thus the same tale might be localized in the several different cities, and be told of as many different personages. In fact, the mediæval biographies of magicians are notable for the similarity of the anecdotes in each to those of all the rest. For example, the making of a head which talked is attributed to Friar Bacon, Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus, Faust and others, as well as Virgil; the ability to fly through the air to Faust, Bacon and the whole tribe of oriental magicians. The modern Hindoo adept shares with the mediæval necromancers the repute of being able to render himself invisible. The ability to convert a drawing or painting into the real thing it represented is a frequently-mentioned trick of magic. Albertus Magnus, like Virgil, made bronze flies to drive away living flies, and a similar tale, in which rats figured, was told of Gregory of Tours. But it is needless to multiply examples. Many of the marvels coupled with Virgil's name had been long familiar in Sicily and Middle

*This is illustrated at a comparatively late date by an amusing anecdote of Chassanee [See *The Rise of the Huguenots*, H. M. Baird, Vol. I., p. 238.] "It appears that on a certain occasion the diocese of the Autun was overrun with mice. The vicar of the bishop was requested to exterminate them. But the ecclesiastical decree was supposed to be most effective when the regular forms of a judicial trial were duly observed. An advocate of the marauders was, therefore, appointed, no other than Chassanee himself, who, espousing with professional ardor the cause of his clients, began by insisting that a summons should be served in each parish; next excused the non-appearance of the defendants, alleging the dangers of the journey by reason of the lying-in-wait of their enemies, the cats; and finally appealing to the compassion of the court in behalf of a race doomed to wholesale destruction, acquitted himself so successfully of his fantastic commission that the mice escaped the censures of the church, and their advocate gained universal applause."

and Southern Italy attached to the name of Heliodorus, a pretended magician, who lived in Sicily in the eighth century. But it is to be doubted whether the Italians led the way in applying any of them to Virgil. In the midst of a passion for such narratives that was almost universal, it was in Italy only that the Virgilian legends were ignored by the popular literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In all the Northern countries the legends appeared fully developed before the year 1250. Their absence in Italian writings showed that Virgil's magical reputation formed as yet no part of Italian folk-lore.

But when credulous foreigners went to Italy with their minds full of such wonders, it was not in the nature of things that they should miss what they expected to find. It is an axiom of travel that the lying of the guide depends on the character of those who are guided. A man who, like Conrad, had already placed all the wonders of Greek mythology in Italy, could be shown anything in Naples that he desired to see.

"We saw," wrote the chancellor, "among other things, the elaborate works of Virgil at Naples. It was a notable fatality that we should have been sent to destroy those walls which had been raised by the chant of philosophers. Another strange thing was that the model of the city, enclosed by the magic art of Virgil in a slender-necked bottle of glass, was of no efficacy in saving the city from capture and pillage. For we have obtained possession, not only of the bottle and its contents, but also of the city; and we have razed the walls in accordance with the imperial mandate without breaking the talisman. However, it may have been that an almost imperceptible crack which we found in the glass, was sufficient

to destroy its magical virtue and make it an injury to the city. There is in the same city a horse of bronze, so endowed by the magical incantations of Virgil that, as long as it remained whole, no living horse could become sway-backed, although previous to the construction of this statue the horses were unfitted by weakness for the saddle, and since it has been damaged they can no longer bear a knight without having their spines broken. In one of the fortresses now occupied by the imperial guards, the main gateway of which is shut with double doors of bronze, Virgil placed a bronze fly which, while it was intact, prevented flies from entering the city. The bones of Virgil are placed in a castle overlooking the city, but surrounded at its base on all sides by the sea. If these bones are exposed to the air the sky becomes obscured forthwith, the sea rises and the roar of the tempest is heard. This we have seen and proved. We were told that the so-called Ferrean gate was the one beneath which Virgil had confined all the serpents which abound in the many caverns and vaults and crypts which lie beneath the surface of the earth in that region. When the walls and gates were destroyed, this gate was left standing, because we feared to release the serpents from their prison. There is also in Naples a shambles so contrived by Virgil that the flesh of an animal killed in it will keep fresh and untainted for six weeks, but if taken out will stink and appear to be putrid. Mt. Vesuvius, which stands over against the city, once every decade pours out volumes of flame mingled with foul-smelling ashes. Virgil erected between the mountain and the city the bronze statue of an archer, with his cross bow drawn and the arrow on the string ready to shoot. A rustic, struck with wonder because the statue, though always in readiness, never would shoot, touched the string. The flying

arrow fell into the crater, the flames burst forth and afterward observed neither time nor season."

VI

The case of Gervase was different from that of Conrad. When the author of the *Otia Imperialia* visited Italy sufficient time had elapsed for the growth of numerous legends. The work of Neckam had been in the hands of scholars for fully a quarter of a century, and the *Polycraticus* of John of Salisbury had been widely read since its publication in 1171. An example has been given of the development of a marvellous tale from the trifling incident of a lunatic's search for Virgil's relics, and the inference is obvious that other tales were developed with equal ease from an equally trivial origin. Moreover, Gervase was a professed marvel hunter. Echoing that phraseology with which Pliny habitually introduced statements hard to believe, Gervase defined the marvellous to be merely that which, while it might be true to nature, surpassed the understanding of man. Citing the examples of the salamander which could only live in fire, and of rocks that could only be burned under water, he cautioned his readers against condemning as fabulous anything, however incredible, which they found in his book until they were able to explain the mysteries that beset their own daily life. Throughout his remarks on the Virgilian legends he had the air of one who sought to enliven a familiar subject by incorporating novel thoughts and incidents with anecdotes that had long ago lost their freshness. He first presented the case of a church refectory in a city of Gaul, which was remarkable for its freedom from flies. The church was enriched with the relics of saints, and was celebrated for

the frequent occurrence of miracles. Having learned by hearsay of the exceptional immunity from the visits of insects which was enjoyed in the ancient refectory, Gervase was led to investigate the matter for himself, and was surprised to find that the wonderful story was true.

"But then," he proceeds, "we know that in the Campania, in the city of Naples, Virgil, by means of his mathematical skill, made a bronze fly of such power, that, as long as it remained entire in the place appointed for it, even the most remote parts of the city were free from flies. In the same city there is a shambles in the partition walls of which Virgil placed a piece of flesh, so efficacious that, while included among the contents of the building, no flesh became tainted. One of the gates of Naples opens in the direction of Nola, a renowned city of the Campania. The passage through this gate is paved with stones, under which, by means of an image, Virgil imprisoned all the venomous reptiles of the region; so that, while the whole of the spacious city is supported on subterranean columns, no fly is to be found in its chambers nor vaults, and not a serpent in the gardens within the walls. In the garden of Virgil, on the slope of Monte Vergine, there is the bronze statue of a man holding a trumpet to his mouth. Whenever the south wind blows into this trumpet its direction is changed. Now observe the reason for this precaution against the wind from the south. There is in the confines of the Neapolitan territory a very high mountain, rising from the sea, which overlooks the spacious plain of the Land of Labor. In the month of May this mountain belches forth stinking vapor, and, at the same time, throws out very hot cinders, burned to the color of charcoal. They say, judging by these signs, that the crater is the chimney

of a terrene inferno. When the south wind blows, a burning dust burns up the herbage and the fruit and reduces the fields to sterility. Virgil, to relieve the country from this misfortune, as we have said, placed a statue on the hill opposite with a trumpet in order that at the first sound of the winded horn, and at the first wave of air entering the trumpet, the wind should exhaust itself, repulsed by the power of mathematics (*vi mathesis.*) In the same territory there is a wonderful passage hewed in the solid rock beneath the mountain. It is of such a length that a person standing midway can barely descry the entrances. This subterranean gallery was excavated by means of Virgil's mathematical learning (*arte mathematica*), and so wisely protected that, in the heart of the mountain, the most ingenious devices of fraud and malice are rendered nugatory."

Gervase pretended to a certain method in testing by his own observation or experience the wonders related to him. As if to substantiate all the remarkable things which he had been writing about Virgil, he gave a detailed account of what happened to himself upon entering the city of Naples through the gate of Good and Ill Fortune. He had arrived there in company with Philip, son of the Duke of Salisbury, in the hope of finding a ship in which they could put to sea. The travellers were ready to accept much inconvenience, as they were eager to be away on their voyage. While in the city they visited Archdeacon Pinatelli, whose acquaintance Gervase had made in the school of canon law at Bologna. At the port they found a vessel almost ready to sail which suited them in every particular, and the visitors were naturally led to inquire the cause of such a piece of good luck.

"Ah," exclaimed the archdeacon, with the manner of one who had in mind the only solution of which the problem was capable, "by what road did you enter the city?" and added, when he was satisfied upon this point, "Fortune favored you, because you merited her aid. But, pray tell me, by which of the two gates that stand side by side, did you first purpose to enter?"

"When we came to the gates," answered Gervase, "we started toward the left as that which was more convenient for us, but it happened that an ass laden with wood met us in the way and compelled us to go to the right."

"Just as I supposed," said the archdeacon. "Now, that you may know the wonderful works of Virgil in this place, I will point out to you the memorial which he has left upon the earth."

So they all went to the gate, and Pinatelli showed his visitors, on the right, a head of Parian marble, mirthful and pleasant to look upon, and on the left, another, also in Parian marble, but with features distorted, as if by grief and pain. These two contrasted images of the human countenance, he explained, governed the fortunes of all who entered the city. No care could avert the decree. Whoever was enabled to pass inward through the right port prospered in all that he undertook, while he who turned to the left was defrauded of all his wishes. "Inasmuch as you were turned unwillingly to the right by the ass and its burden," he moralized, "consider how quickly you accomplished what you aimed at."

"These things," concluded Gervase, "we do not write as arguing with the Sadducees, who assert that in God and in marble—that is, in fate and chance—all things consist; but we desire only to commemorate the mathematical studies of

Virgil." From his standpoint this mysterious power, belonging to the science of numbers, was sufficient to harmonize the most improbable tales with the demonstrated principles of science.

VII

As in this case, so in others, the association of magical tales with the name of Virgil led at once to the identification of certain objects of art as the visible proof of the respective narratives. It is possible that some statues might have been connected with the name of Virgil, independently of the legends, from very early times. According to a Neapolitan writer of the fourteenth century the two marble faces in the Nolan gate still occupied the places where Gervase had seen them. The bronze horse to which another of the legends referred was still shown in 1322. Time and barbarism had almost destroyed it, but the legend accounted for its broken condition by the statement that the workmen, to whom the statue was entrusted for repairs, opened it to see what it contained, and thus destroyed its symmetry as a statue and its virtue as a talisman. Fragments still preserved in the museum of Naples show that the figure must have been of colossal size. Among the innumerable relics of antiquity a human figure might easily have been found answering to the description given by either Conrad or Gervase of the statue opposed to Mt. Vesuvius. The favorite subject of a youth brandishing a javelin, which Pliny mentioned, would have answered, for it is obvious from the differing accounts of the two travellers that the crossbow and the trumpet are mere inferences from the attitude of the fragmentary statue. In

the fourteenth century the statue was spoken of as one that had stood in the Gate of the Winds, or, as it was afterward called, the Royal Gate. The most notable, and, perhaps, the most ancient of the objects which Virgil was supposed to have endowed with talismanic efficacy was the bronze fly. Long before the time of Conrad or Gervase, John of Salisbury had related an instructive fable about it, according to his usual custom, with a moral. Marcellus, the nephew of Octavian, was passionately fond of fowling. The wise poet asked the youth whether he would prefer to have a decoy that would lure the whole tribe of birds to destruction, or a fly that would banish all annoying insects. Marcellus, at that time governor of Naples, consulted his uncle, and chose the fly. From this incident the sapient John evolved the highly edifying docet that the truest pleasure is found in works of utility. The important point is, however, the proof furnished by this story that the bronze fly as a work of Virgil was familiar to men of learning before the year 1170. The English satirist, whoever he may have been, that wrote *The Vision of Golias, the Bishop*, years before the close of the twelfth century, was also familiar with it, and looked upon it as a fact of classical history. One would suppose from his allusion that the making of bronze flies was Virgil's sole occupation. It is worth remembering that Pliny mentioned several statuaries who modelled figures of insects, and, among the rest, the cicada and the fly. The bronze to which Conrad and Gervase refer was about the size of a frog. It was subsequently removed from the place where it was seen by Conrad to a window in Castle Capuano, and thence to Castle St. Angelo, where it was soon discovered to have lost its efficacy.

It is not at all strange that Conrad, following the universal

belief of his times, should have considered the glass toy captured by the imperial troops a talisman for the protection of the city; nor that he should have connected it with the name of Virgil, in view of the notions he had brought with him. A great stretch of credulity would be required to credit the supposition that Neapolitans acknowledged to their hated conquerors even the existence of such an ineffectual palladium. The legend subsequently developed by French and German romancers substituted an egg enclosed in a flask of glass, this in turn being deposited in a receptacle of iron; and this was associated with the ancient Castle of the Sea built by William I. in 1154, and afterward enlarged by Frederick II. In the fourteenth century the name of the fortress was changed to the Castle of the Enchanted Egg, by which appellation it became renowned in the legends of the Knights of the Order of the Holy Spirit, founded there in 1352 by Louis of Anjou. In the *Roman de Cleomades* it was related that Virgil built two castles in the sea, each balanced on an egg. One of these castles was destroyed by the breaking of its egg, but the other was described as still standing at Naples. The author of *L'Image du Monde* fancied that the whole city was founded upon an egg, any movement of which caused something like an earthquake. Jans Enenkel, in his *Weltbuch*, increases the number of eggs to three. Of the other talismans *L'Image du Monde* mentioned the fly, the horse, the bridge of air, and a head that uttered prophecies. The *Cleomades* described the horse as raised upon a pillar.

VIII

The idea entertained of Virgil being exactly similar to that entertained of all men of science, it was natural that

fanciful tales in respect to the latter should be frequently transferred to him. Of those persons whose legendary exploits were confounded with those of Virgil, the most famous was Pope Sylvester II., better known by the name of Gerbert, who enjoyed a scandalous notoriety on account of his taste for mathematical and mechanical studies. The mediæval opinion of asbestos was not that it was proof against fire, but that when it once got to burning it could not be put out. In *L'Image du Monde* the antique superstition concerning inextinguishable lamps was applied to Virgil possibly with this opinion in mind. Two wax tapers and an ever-burning lamp lighted his sepulchre. In the *Cleomades*, however, and in the versions of *The Seven Wise Masters*, a fire was substituted for the lamp and candles, and before it was placed an archer with bow drawn ready to shoot. The arrow bore a Hebrew inscription: "If any one strikes me, I will strike." Of course, somebody was found in course of time foolish enough to strike the statue, whereupon the arrow sped from the bow and extinguished the fire. The inscription was very similar to that on a statue mentioned in the legends of Gerbert. The account of the latter given by William of Malmesbury is thus translated by Warton: "At Rome there was a brazen statue, extending the forefinger of the right hand; and on its forehead was written, 'Strike here.' Being suspected of concealing a treasure, it had received many bruises from the credulous and ignorant in their endeavors to open it. Gerbert unriddled the mystery. At noonday, observing the shadow of the forefinger upon the ground, he marked the spot. At night he went to the place with a page carrying a lamp. There, by a magical operation, he opened a wide passage in the earth, through which they both descended and came to a

vast palace The walls, the beams and the whole structure were of gold; they saw golden images of knights playing at chess, with a king and queen of gold at a banquet, with numerous attendants in gold and cups of immense size and value. In a recess was a carbuncle, whose lustre illuminated the whole palace, opposite to which stood a figure with bended bow. As they attempted to touch some of the rich furniture, all the golden images seemed to rush upon them. Gerbert was too wise to attempt this a second time, but the page was bold enough to snatch from the table a golden knife of exquisite workmanship. At that moment all the golden images rose up with a dreadful noise, the figure with the bow shot at the carbuncle, and a total darkness ensued. The page then replaced the knife, otherwise they would both have suffered a cruel death."

A variation of the same idea is found in Jans Enenkel's account of Virgil, according to which the statue was at Naples. It was of gold, and one hand rested on the figure of a wild buck, while the other seemed to point toward a neighboring mountain. It was universally believed that the statue indicated some concealed treasure, and many people, supposing it to be in the mountain, made excavations there to no purpose. Finally, an intoxicated man raised the question why this statue, which had mocked mankind so long, was suffered to rest its hand on the buck. Vowing that he would avenge the people, he struck the beast a mighty blow, severing the head from the body, and thus disclosed the hoard at which the statue had been pointing all the time.

It was said of Gerbert, as of Virgil, that he contrived a prophetic head of bronze, and that his death happened through his not having understood one of its predictions. The

story of Virgil in *L'Image du Monde*, and in *Renars Contrefait*, was that one day upon consulting the prophetic head, in respect to a voyage which he proposed to make, he met with the response that he would be safe enough if he only took care of his head. He supposed the allusion was to the bronze head, and not to the head on his shoulders, and so, failing to take proper precautions, was prostrated by a sunstroke and died from inflammation of the brain.

A similar confusion caused the introduction of Virgil's name in some separate tales in collections like the *Gesta Romanorum*. A notable example is the tale so often mentioned as containing the plot used by Shakespeare in the Merchant of Venice. Briefly, the tale is that of a knight who has impoverished himself in vain for love of a royal damsel. In order to obtain a loan he gives a bond to the usurer by which he agrees to forfeit a piece of his flesh to be cut from his body, if he fails to pay the debt. A portion of the sum borrowed was used in paying the fee of Magister Virgilius, the learned man, whose advice enabled the lover to prosper in his suit.

IX

With the Italian writers who took up the legends, Virgil rarely fell below the character of the man of learning. They manifested the same delicacy which Gervase had shown in avoiding any imputation of magical practices. The author of the *Cronica di Partenope*, proud of Virgil's relations to Naples, attributed to his skill the aqueducts, fountains, wells and sewers of the city and added to the number of the talismans a bronze cicada, which destroyed all the cicadas in the Neapolitan territories, and a little fish which drew living

fishes into the nets. The story of the palladium of Naples was restored to its earliest form. Carracciolo, however, increased the number of prophetic heads to four, and explained that they were placed in Naples by Virgil for the purpose of keeping the Duke informed of the events transpiring throughout the world. The Florentine popular poet, Antonio Rucci, noted the various talismans attributed to Virgil in his commonplace book, but made no other use of them. He followed the example of the earliest romancers in ascribing Virgil's legendary works to proficiency in astronomy. Buonamente Aliprando, in his versified chronicle of Mantua, mentioned the enchanted fly as enclosed in a glass. He added a story which had not been related before, that Virgil created a fountain of oil for the use of the Neapolitans.

X

The conception of Virgil as a physician and man of science appears to have given occasion for a very bizarre and awkward interpolation in the biography which goes under the name of Donatus. The spurious anecdote probably dates from the fourteenth century, and it is one of those which particularly aroused the resentment of Heyne against the monks, who, he supposed, were its authors. Considered merely as an invention, the tale is not altogether lacking in cleverness. Having become more skillful and erudite than others—so goes the story, Virgil betook himself to the city, where he obtained the friendship of the imperial master of horse on account of his success in treating the diseases of the horses. As a reward for his labor, Virgil received a daily allowance of bread, along with all the other servants in the stables. In the meanwhile

a Crotonian colt of wonderful beauty, sent as a gift to Cæsar, arrived, and in the judgment of all but Virgil promised to be of great strength and speed. Maro, after a careful examination, insisted that the animal was foaled by a sick mare, and would never come to much. The result proved his opinion to be correct. When Augustus heard of the matter, he ordered that Virgil's allowance of bread should be doubled. Afterward a litter of puppies was brought from Spain, and Virgil gave so accurate an account of the breed, disposition and capacities of the animals that the emperor quadrupled the allowance of bread.

In a matter left wholly to conjecture, it is competent to infer that the anecdote, so far as it has been given, was by one hand, and that the sequel was added by another writer. The latter apparently reflected that as yet no explanation had been given of the method by which Virgil attained his veterinary skill, nor of the steps by which he rose to the acquaintance of Octavian, nor of his relations with Pollio. The allowances of bread, so often mentioned, seemed to him absurdly out of character. The concluding part of the tale begins with the statement that Augustus was in doubt whether he was really the son of Octavius or not, and it occurred to him that, perhaps, Virgil could discover the fact in this case, as he had done in the case of the Crotonian colt and the Spanish puppies. He, therefore, spoke to the poet very privily one day, and asked him to solve this problem if he could. Substantially, the question of Augustus was:

"Do you know me well enough to tell me who my father was?"

"I know," answered Maro, with caution, "that you are Cæsar Augustus, and that you have power almost as great as

that of the immortal gods, so that you can make happy whomsoever you will."

"My power shall be exerted to the utmost in your behalf, if you answer my question. You know there are some who think me the son of Octavius, while others insist that I am the son of another man. Now, what do you say?"

"I can answer that," replied Maro, with a smile, "if you allow me to speak freely, without fear of punishment."

"Never fear," exclaimed Augustus, "you shall be rewarded, not punished."

Then Maro, inspecting the eyes of the emperor, said: "It is quite an easy thing for mathematicians and philosophers to discern in the lower animals their inherited qualities; in man it is impossible, but I think I could guess very nearly what occupation your father followed."

Augustus was all attention.

"As near as I can make out, your father was a baker."

Cæsar was confounded at this unexpected turn, but Virgil, without giving him a chance to speak, added: "For this reason: when I predicted certain things, which could be divined only by a man of the utmost learning, you, as prince of the world, again and again commanded that my reward should be an allowance of bread. Surely, that was characteristic of a baker, or the son of a baker."

The witticism pleased Cæsar, who exclaimed: "But now you shall receive gifts, not from a baker, but from a magnanimous sovereign." And he gave him many things, and commended him to Pollio.

SIXTH—VIRGIL, THE SAVIOUR OF ROME

I

Describing the shield of Æneas, in the eighth book of the Æneid, the poet was careful to include among the pictures or reliefs with which it was ornamented one commemorative of the hero Manlius. The Tarpeian citadel, the capitol, the figure of the warrior and that of the bird whose cries aroused him from slumber were all depicted in such a way as to make one suspect that in these verses lay the germ of the fancy embodied in Neckam's tale about the temple and the statues which defended Rome. Enchanted statues were a common feature of oriental tales, but usually in such circumstances as to suggest little in common with the Virgilian legend. It is not necessary, however, to appeal to oriental beliefs for the origin of this strange error in Europe. Paganism, with its innumerable statues of the gods left a mark on the minds of men too deep to be quickly effaced. Christians did not deny that the statues of the gods were animated by a superhuman intelligence. As heathens, they themselves had been cognizant of things which, in their limited state of knowledge, with the prejudices of ages resting upon them, they could

not explain without presuming that idols were inhabited by beings more than human in prescience and power. When Celsus adduced the oracles that had been uttered by idols as the proof of the pagan religion, Origen replied, not by denying the fact, but by denouncing the deities as infernal powers. One instance of this superstition is found in the first apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus, where the idols of Egypt are represented as assembling to pay homage to one supreme idol out of which Satan spoke. That this remained a prevalent notion, and that the example cited was looked upon as furnishing an argument in behalf of Christianity, are plain inferences from the fact that Herbers, in the *Dolopathos*, relating the tale at length, used it to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ, because all these statues were said to have fallen when He was taken to Egypt by His parents. Augustine quoted Hermes Trismegistus as saying to Æsculapius: "The statues, animated and full of sensation and spirit, and who do such wonderful things; the statues prescient of future events, and foretelling them by lot, by prophet, by dreams and many other things; who bring disease on men and cure them again, giving them joy or sorrow, according to their merits." Whatever may be concluded as to the authenticity of this passage or the historical reality of Hermes, it is plain that Augustine accepted the notion of animated statues as in part true. This impression respecting the symbols of idolatry harmonized well with the popular notions of magic, and made a proper foundation for the most fanciful superstructure which a rude and curious civilization could devise. The early story of the fall of the idols in Egypt had more than one counterpart in the West, and all these were connected in legend with the incidents attending the crucifixion as narrated by the

Evangelists. A statue of Romulus in Rome fell when Christ died, a fountain of oil burst out of the ground, the temple of Peace tumbled into ruins, and other wonders were said to have occurred.

These tales did not appear in Christian literature until long after all other literature had ceased to live in Europe. Most of them were doubtless the invention of Christian times. But the legend which Neckam revived has some features which give it a look of greater antiquity. Even the freest, wildest imagination will remain inactive without the stimulus of mystery. To the nations of Southern Europe, the customs of Rome long retained that air of familiarity which was the result of the close relationship produced by the empire. The people of those nations had been acquainted with the architecture of Rome, with its statues, its literature, from first to last, and had contributed many of the greatest names in Roman annals. It is improbable that a tale which involved a false and absurd explanation of Roman methods of war could have become current among them at an early period. Nor is it probable, on the other hand, that long after the Roman power had dwindled to insignificance, and after the terror and mystery of the Roman military science was forgotten either barbarian or provincial philosophers should invent needless solutions for problems which had never been suggested to them. But suppose an insulated civilization, dating from the beginning of the empire, interrupted but not overthrown by repeated invasions of savages; owing its origin to the practical sense of the Roman soldier, and its renewal from time to time to military changes, to adventurous travellers and finally to missionaries; owing little, if anything, for centuries to legitimate literature or science—and there is provided a

state of society in which magical stories, to account for the foresight and the wide reach of Roman genius, might be implicitly believed. The stories would have been of the kind which a Roman soldier could delight in telling to a group of credulous natives, and the requisite credulity could not have been found save in some far corner of the empire. Celtic Britain and Saxon England alone furnish conditions parallel to this hypothetical state. It is a general opinion that the tales of the *Gesta Romanorum* acquired among the Saxons the form in which they descended to modern times; and the question that remains is: Through what medium did the Saxons obtain the fragments which they pieced together in those tales? The inquiry is one to which all answers must be conjectural, and the test of the conjecture is its simplicity, directness and probability. The relations of Celtic Britain to the Roman world, and subsequently to the rough, inquisitive Saxon invaders, allowed of the direct transmission of such tales; and the enlightenment of Britain was never so great as to preclude a widespread belief in them as fragments of genuine history. Among the Britons the power of Roman arms and the prescience of Roman statesmanship were exemplified at the farthest remove from the centre of authority. There was ample occasion for inquiry as to the means by which the empire maintained its supremacy, while the eagerness to obtain the desired knowledge was tempered with little or no skill to discriminate between truth and fiction. Attributing the *Salvatio Romæ* in its crudest traditional form to the Roman soldiers, garrisoned among a people easily affected by mystery and credulous to an extreme, a motive is found for the tale such as cannot readily be furnished by any other hypothesis. The oriental element in the tradition is accounted for with less

difficulty in this than in any other way. A more cosmopolitan body of men never existed than the officers and veterans of the Roman armies. They became familiar in their campaigns with the customs of the most widely separated races. When it is remembered that they transported elephants to Britain* for the purpose of repeating the tactics which they learned in Asia, it will be readily believed that the folk-lore of the East was used to enliven the routine of their lives in camp, and drawn upon to magnify the name of Rome in the ears of ignorant barbarians. They might even have had examples of such tales in that mass of fiction written for their use, which corresponded in quality and variety to the modern novel. The fragments still in existence of this Milesian literature show that its inspiration was largely oriental, and that its interest depended upon the belief in magic. Now, from the final abandonment of the island of Britain by the troops of the empire to the first invasion by the Saxons there intervened a period of only forty years, and within the three centuries next following the victors attained a civilization equal to that which they supplanted. The opinion that the Saxons extirpated the Celts in taking possession of the country is not now considered tenable; the fact being that during years of stubborn war the two races became fused gradually into one. The Celtic individual traits tended to soften the rugged Teutonic personality, while the British language, with the exception of a few words, was replaced by the more useful, though less poetic, speech of the conquerors. Therefore, from the Roman government down to the time when stories like the one in question may be supposed to have been picked up by the early mediæval

*So says Polyænus [*Stratagemata*, viii., 23, 5], but the argument in the text does not depend on what is at the best a doubtful anecdote.

writers, the chain of communication by which they could have passed from race to race, and from one generation to the next, was as complete as in any case of folk-lore transmission.

An example that may be cited as an instance of the handing down of such legends is preserved in the treatise of Roger Bacon on multiplying and magnifying glasses. The passage is not unknown, though it has been misinterpreted sometimes to support the inference that Bacon invented lenses. What he really intimates is, that the invention was one of ancient times, well known to the learned. Mirrors, he said, could be made of such a figure that they would cause one thing to seem to be many, and multiply a single man till he appeared to be an army; that would cause to appear as many suns and moons as was desired. And so, he says, infinite terrors could be roused in the imaginations of an enemy's army, so that, on account of the multiplication of the apparitions of stars or of men congregated over them, they would give themselves up to despair. Perspective glasses might be so made as to cause that which was far away to seem near, or conversely; so that one might read the most minute letters at an incredible distance, and might enumerate even the smallest things, and make the stars to appear when he wished. With this remarkable statement, antedating the proper discovery of the telescope by centuries, he couples this strange anecdote: "For thus it is supposed that Julius Cæsar, standing on the shores of the sea in Gaul, perceived by means of a great glass the position of the camps and cities of the Greater Britain." It hardly admits of a doubt that here Bacon applied to a tradition well known and widely credited, his own interpretation, drawn from his knowledge of optics. Manifestly, this tradition involved to minds less enlightened than Bacon's the notion of magic. If

such a legend descended in one case, it might have been handed down in other cases. The fact that the story of the magic temple and statues at Rome was known as early as the eighth century to writers in widely separated regions supports the theory of its remote antiquity. Not only was it mentioned in a fragment on the wonders of the world, the authorship of which was attributed to Bede, but it was also related in a chapter on the same subject by the Greek historian Cosma, who seems to have identified the magical temple with the Capitol, or with the Temple of Jove, and to have associated it with the familiar anecdote of Manlius. That is to say, he expressed substantially the idea which Virgil had suggested in describing the shield of Æneas. It was in this form probably that the story was circulated among the eastern nations, for there is among the Arabian tales one of striking similarity, the upshot of which is that King Sarkaaf made a duck of brass and placed it on a column of emerald at the gate of his capital city. This duck was gifted with magical shrewdness and perspicacity, for, whenever a foreigner attempted to enter the city, it fluttered its wings and raised so great an outcry that the people were at once drawn to repel the intruder.

II

When it is attempted to account for the introduction of Virgil's name into the legend the most important consideration seems to be the abiding fame of the Æneid as intimately associated with the military renown of the empire. With the single exception of Virgil, the Romans who, in the middle ages, became the centre of massive or imposing legends were such men as Cæsar, Pompey, Trajan, Nero, Crassus—names

brilliant in the annals of Roman arms or infamous in crime. These names were the ones most likely to have been preserved in tradition. That the Romans, in a time of general ignorance and barbarism, would no longer be able to give a historic reason for the existence of many monuments in their city, and would accept, perhaps, without question legends respecting them that had passed through many changes in other lands, may be readily believed. The mass of historic reminiscence in Rome was so great that the knowledge of the true name and meaning of each relic would have required learning far in excess of what has been shown by the population of any city. Pride in the Roman name and in the great deeds of the olden time was never wanting; but the memory of particular facts would be clouded at the best. The foreigners who visited Rome went with minds fresh from a new civilization and full to overflowing of the legendary spirit. They were ignorant of the possibilities belonging to a civilization like that which Rome had possessed. The majestic remains of the imperial city suggested thoughts of magic. Those who viewed these remains only through the eye of the imagination, taking the exaggerated narratives of travellers, reproduced them in forms that lacked the merit even of topographical accuracy, but were rich in those wonders so delightful to the mediæval fancy. The Romans in their turn received back these tales, magnified in proportion to the distance over which they had been carried, and referred them to things that were actually in existence. So it fell out that one of the objects to be seen in Rome was the tomb of Pallas, the son of Evander, a hero who possibly never lived outside the pages of the Æneid. The actual presence of a votive ship accorded with the fables relative to Æneas and made it easy to suppose that the very vessel had

been preserved in which he voyaged to Latium. The tale of Trajan and the poor widow was told in another form before the name of Trajan was brought into it. His association with it was probably due to some sculpture in which he was represented on horseback, while the woman kneeling before him was the symbol of some conquered province. In this case, as in the more important one of Virgil's magical temple, the addition of a famous name to a story already familiar seems like the artifice of a writer studying to produce an effect. This suspicion is strengthened, rather than otherwise, by the knowledge that Alexander Neckam was the first among authors whose works remain to couple Virgil's name with the *Salvatio Romæ*. For Neckam, according to Roger Bacon, was a man who cared too little for the truth and too much for the empty show of erudition. Mere novelty affected him as a genuine discovery would have impressed a more conscientious thinker. He was not above writing paradoxical or incredible things with the sole and trivial purpose of startling his readers. While he may have owed the particular figment now under discussion to those wandering story tellers who were so fertile in those things, yet it seems not less probable that he set forth an invention of his own. It is easy to see that with his loose habit of mind he may have satisfied himself with some reasoning like this: Granted that there was a temple at Rome of the kind described, then the proficiency of Virgil in mathematics renders it certain that he only was capable of building that temple; ergo, he did build it. If Neckam had authority outside of his own erratic mind for this addition to the list of Virgil's achievements, it is strange that he should have related it without the name of the poet in his own poem *de Laudibus Divinæ Sapientiæ*. If Virgil's supposed connection

with the story had been a subject of frequent, or even of occasional narratives, it is difficult to see how it could have escaped the author of the *Dolopathos* who attributed the origin of a temple, not unlike that which Neckam described, to Romulus, though confessedly writing a tale in which the figure of Virgil was most prominent. Moreover, allusion to this temple without the name of Virgil was frequent. It is mentioned in a manuscript preserved at Wesobrunn which was written in the tenth century; in the work of an anonymous author of Salerno, belonging to the same period, and in a Vatican manuscript of the eleventh century. It was touched upon, also, in the *Mirabilia Urbis Romæ*, the guide-book which passed through many changes in the successive editions that were given out by the copyists, but was certainly known in the twelfth century. Many works in later ages contained references to the legend without the name of Virgil, the omission being due in some cases to the lack of acquaintance with all the phases through which the narrative had passed, and in others to a distaste for such a use of Virgil's name. Another fact which contributes in a small degree to fasten the invention upon Neckam is that he is quoted as the authority for the story in the *Gesta Romanorum*, the inference being that the copyist knew of none earlier than he was.

The anonymous author of Salerno, in the effort to explain how it happened that the temple with its extraordinary collection of statues was no longer to be seen, invented or copied a story much more picturesque than Neckam's report of a prophecy fulfilled. He declared that the statues had been carried to Byzantium early in the tenth century. On account of their magical efficacy the Emperor Alexander had them

clothed in garments of silk,* and became excessively proud of his achievement in depriving the Romans of their chief protection. But one night St. Peter appeared to him, exclaiming in anger, "I am the prince of the Romans," and the next day the emperor died.

III

In the work attributed by Neckam, and after him by Helinand, to the skill of Virgil, which was known subsequently by the name of the *Salvatio Romæ*, there is apparent a mingling of vague reminiscences of the Pantheon, the Coliseum, the Capitol, and the theatre of Pompey with its statues of the conquered nations of the empire, the whole shaped by a superstitious notion concerning the vigilance necessary in so vast a rulership as that of Rome had been. The French romancers, whose tales were permeated with ideas obtained from the East after the return of the early crusaders, replaced the truly antique wooden statues of Neckam with a mirror that possessed magical properties. A mirror of this kind was said by Benjamin of Tudela to have been placed on the Pharos of Alexandria. It revealed the approach of a hostile fleet, even at a distance of five hundred parasangs. This marvellous instrument was destroyed by a cunning Greek who hated the Egyptians. With changes in detail the story of the mirror at Rome is the same as the Alexandrian tale. Manifestly both are due ultimately to an exaggerated report concerning Greek discoveries in physics. In the *Cleomades* of Adenez, written about the close of the thirteenth century,

*The practice of clothing statues was not unknown in the middle ages, as is shown in the poem of *Filo* preserved by Leyser.

and the *Renars Contrefait*, which belonged to the early part of the fourteenth century, and in *The Romance of the Seven Wise Men*, at that time, in various forms and different languages, the most popular book in Europe, the Roman wonder was ascribed to Virgil. But there was no universal agreement on this point. Frequently enough no attempt was made to account for the building of the tower and the mirror, while the narrative of their fall was essentially the same in all cases. In one example, where the name of Virgil was not mentioned, the tower on which the mirror stood was called the Tower of the Tribune. Crassus, whose wealth and avarice and disgraceful death strongly affected the imagination of the middle ages, was said to have been the emperor who caused the ruin of the Roman power. He was visited by two brothers who called themselves prophets and dreamers of dreams, but who plotted the destruction of the empire. They led the miserly emperor to believe that a great treasure was hidden beneath the tower. They were permitted to undermine the foundations of the structure, and thus caused it to fall.* The narrative is so particular in its details as to lead to the suspicion that it was based on an actual though comparatively modern occurrence. The so-called Tower of the Tribune, for example, was said to be covered with inscriptions celebrating the names and deeds of all who had achieved anything of importance for the city. This characteristic element in the tale may be illustrated by a

*The superstition, of which this anecdote is an example, is not wanting at the present day. In October, 1884, died at Paris Madame Cailhava, who had become notorious by her persistent efforts to discover hidden treasure in the Church of St. Denis. The French authorities, exactly like the Crassus of the legend, authorized her crazy search which really imperilled the structure. The dean of the chapter put an end to her excavations.

singular incident which Flaminius Vacca, a Roman archæologist of the sixteenth century, narrated. In the time of Pius IV., according to Flaminius, there appeared in Rome a foreigner who had in his possession an ancient book containing a treatise on the manner of finding hidden treasure. This book had also a picture of an antique bas-relief, representing a serpent and human figure. The latter held a cornucopia in one hand and with the other pointed to the earth. After a diligent search in the ruins of the city, the stranger found the original of this picture. It was upon the base of the Arch of Titus. Pius responded to the man's petition for the privilege of digging beneath the side of the arch, by explaining that the monument was the property of the Roman people whose permission must be sought. The popular consent was obtained, and the treasure hunter carried on his excavations until he laid open the entrance to a subterranean passage, the existence of which was unknown. But the populace, fearing that he purposed to destroy the arch, rose in a tumult and drove him from the city. When it is remembered how slight the occasion was for the extraordinary narrative of Gervase, concerning the discovery of Virgil's book on the *ars notoria*, it will be readily imagined that the incentives would be frequent for the invention of tales concerning hidden treasures.

In the tale connected with Virgil's name, differing through all its changes but little from the account as first given in *The Seven Wise Men*, the king of some subject nation—Hungarian, Carthaginian, German or Apulian—is represented as unwilling longer to pay tribute to Rome. In order to evade the tax he accepts the offer made to him by three wise men, who promise to overthrow the tower on which the magic mirror is placed. The conspirators go to Rome, and begin their work

by burying in several places large coffers full of gold. The emperor, who is sometimes, but not always, called Crassus, eager to be enriched, allows them to dig in the places which they point out. Their success in finding what they themselves have hidden persuades the emperor to allow the search beneath the tower. The greatest anxiety is pretended for the safety of the precious palladium of Rome. Wooden props are placed underneath the tower. Taking advantage of the night, the conspirators set fire to these props and then flee; but at a safe distance stop to see the tower and mirror fall. The Romans, indignant that this calamity should have come upon them through the avarice of the emperor, pour molten gold down his throat, and thus he dies. Virgil's only connection with the story is as the architect of the wonderful structure.

IV

While the romancers excluded the statues from this magical temple or tower, which was attributed to the arts of Virgil, they were careful not to forget them altogether. The notions of the mysterious efficacy of images had materially changed under the power of a religion in which idols as symbols of the deity were rigorously excluded from worship. Over this popular tendency the antiquarian fancies of Neckam had less influence than was exercised by the common superstitions in matters of physical science. In these the mirrors held a high place. It was, however, the common belief, both in the Orient, as is shown by many Arabian and Persian tales, and in Europe, that statues could be made with unlimited automatic powers. This fanciful belief was what gave vitality to some tales, the very existence of which would otherwise be incredible. For

example, Adenez related that Virgil placed on the walls of the city four statues in the attitude of ball-players. These statues represented respectively Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. They had a golden ball. Spring, when his reign was ended, tossed the ball to Summer, and so it went the year round. The early *Romance of the Seven Sages*, in place of these had two statues which determined the weeks by passing a ball back and forth between them. Jean d'Outremeuse, in *Ly Myreur des Histors*, included all these, and added twelve others, whose office it was to keep the people informed of the passage of the months. This group of twelve statues was also mentioned by Jean Mansel in *La Fleur des Histoires*. In the English version of the biography of Virgilius, the magician, there is a manifest desire to blend the popular story as told in the early romances with the more learned imaginings of the twelfth century. While the catastrophe is similar to that of the tale in the *Seven Wise Men*, the temple itself is much nearer the possibilities of history. The description of John Doesborcke was thus:

"The emperour asked of Virgilius howe that he myght make Rome prospere, and have many lands under them, and know when any lande wolde ryse agen theym; and Virgilius sayd to the Emperoure, I woll within short space that do. And he made upon the Capitolium, that was the towne house, made with caruede ymages, and of stone, and that he let call Salvatio Rome; that is to say, this is the Salvacyon of the cytie of Rome; and he made in the compace all the goddes that we call mamettes and ydolles, that were under the subjection of Rome; and every of the goddes that there were had in his hand a bell; and in the myddle of the godes made he one god of Rome. And whensoever that there was any

land wold make any warre ageynst Rome, than wolde the godes tourne theyr backes towarde the god of Rome; and than the god of the land that wolde stande up ageyne Rome clynked his bell so longe that he hath in his hand, tyll the senatours of Rome hereth it, and forthwith they go there and see what land it is that will warre ageynst them; and so they prepare them, and goeth agayn them, and subdueth theym."

When the author of this biography came to describe the death of Virgil, he became more explicit in his description of automatic images. If any proof were required that ingenious mechanical devices in those days were knowingly and intentionally confounded with alleged inventions of magic, it would certainly be found in the account of the castle which Virgil built, as a place where he might make himself young again. There was one entrance only to this stronghold, and that was guarded by twenty-four figures twelve in a row on each side of the way. Each figure was armed with a flail. They were so made that when in motion they beat the ground steadily, like so many threshers. But at the side of the doorway, both without and within the castle, there were "vyces," which only needed to be turned to stop all this machinery, and to set it going. A series of accidents prevented Virgil's rejuvenation, which was to have come about much in the manner of the antique Greek trick of which Pelias was the victim. When it became certain that Virgil was dead, beyond hope of resurrection, there were some covetous souls who thought only of securing his treasure; "but there were none so harday that durste cum in to fetche it, for fere of the coper men that smote so faste with theyr yron flayles." It hardly requires to be pointed out that the misconception which made these statues seem possible in

mechanism related to a department of science entirely different from that falsified in the talisman. The mathematical or metaphysical moment which gave to the bronze fly, and the leech and the statue over against Vesuvius, an air of credibility, was insufficient at a later day, when motion and the imitation of living beings was required of these inanimate things. Unconsciously, great progress had been made toward true science between the time of Gervase and that of Doesborcke; on the one hand, machinery and motion had come to be looked on as necessary, and on the other, the achievements that were attributed to the moving figures were of far less importance than those which had once been predicated of mere solid shapes in metal and wood. In the one case, whole realms of nature were dominated by things whose efficacy was a matter of belief and nothing else; in the other, known laws of physics were misapplied, because the human imagination was only partially released from the slavery of magic.

V

The abiding popularity of the legend respecting the wonderful statues and temple at Rome is shown by the fact that it continued to have a place in the frequent editions of the English chap book, *The Seven Wise Masters*, as late as the beginning of the present century. The episode, called in this cheap pamphlet "The fifth example of the empress," is so full of error and absurdity as to be positively humorous. Its naive mixing up of antique and modern things makes it well worthy of being copied here. It is as follows:

"There reigned in Rome an emperor named Octavius, who was very rich, and loved gold above all things. In his reign

the Romans committed many hostilities upon the neighboring nations, insomuch that they entered into an alliance against the Romans for their preservation, and that which occasioned their reducing other nations to obedience was by the contrivance of one Virgil, who was a great magician, so that if any people offered to rebel it was immediately discovered to them. The story says that he made a tower wherein were as many images as there are kingdoms in the world, and in the head of every image he put a bell, so that if any nation designed to invade the Romans the image of that province would ring his bell, which the citizens of Rome hearing, armed themselves immediately and attacked their adversaries; so that the Romans were dreaded throughout the world. He also made for the benefit of the poor a fire which yielded so great a heat that they came commonly to it, and thereby saved the expense of a fire in their own houses; opposite to this fire was placed a great statue of brass, holding in his left hand a Turkish bow, which was drawn with his right hand ready to let fly, and on the bow was written,

Touch me not, for, if you do,
You will create a deal of wo.

"The image stood there many years, but at last a drunken scholar, looking upon the writing, imagined that there was under it great treasure, and that the superscription was only to frighten people from taking it; whereupon he gave the image such a blow that it fell to the ground and immediately the fire was extinguished, and the place became as cold as if there had never been any fire there. At which the scholar was amazed and ran away, having deprived the city of one of its greatest commodities, and the poor inhabitants cursed him for it. After this, three kings, who had suffered much

by the Romans, consulted how to avenge themselves for it; but one made answer that it was in vain to attempt it so long as the tower images subsisted. Upon this up start three wise masters and told them that they would undertake to destroy the tower and the images. The kings demanding what the cost would be, they replied three tons of gold. The masters then made choice of three vessels, one of earth, another of brass, and a third of silver, and filled them with gold and departed for Rome, in a frigate, where, being landed, they went near the city and buried one of the vessels, which they took notice of; then going into the city, they buried the other two near to the principal church of the city. This done, they agreed how they should accomplish their design. After this manner they effected it. They went one morning to Octavius, and having demanded audience, they told him they were three brethren skilled in magic, and had it revealed to them that the city of Rome abounded in hidden treasure, and they were come thither to discover it; first having the permission of his majesty, promising to give him all they found, and that he might bestow on them what part he pleased. The emperor, glad to hear this news, immediately granted their request; and as he was going to bed, they said: 'My Lord, this night, the eldest of us will have a vision, or dream, and the third day he shall shew you what it signifies.' And when the third day was come, he went to the emperor and said: 'A treasure will be discovered to us this morning without the city, and since we find treasure without the city, we may well expect to find greater within it.' The emperor, joyful at what the dreamer said, told him that he would go with them to see the issue of the business. Away they went to the place where the treasure was hidden; when the master

took an astrolabe and quadrant to find exactly where the treasure was, and having diligently measured the ground, he bid them dig, and it was not long before they discovered a vessel, which the emperor seeing, he himself would take it up; and finding it to be as the master had said, he returned to the place, giving a great reward to the master, hoping in a little while by their means to be master of a mine of gold. The next morning another of them told the emperor that he had seen a vision, and that in the city they should find treasure, twice as much as they found the day before; and accordingly he ordered one to dig near the tower where they had buried the other gold, and after digging awhile they discovered two vessels, both filled with gold. This so increased the affection of the emperor towards the masters that he did nothing without their advice, and, having given them a great reward, was in great expectation to see the effects of the third master's vision. Accordingly next morning he went in to the emperor and told him that not far from hence he had seen a treasure in his vision much richer than both the others, and the place where it lay was six hundred yards from the palace, and then by the astrolabe and quadrant, he measured the ground and found that it lay just under the foundations of the tower where the images and statue were placed. The emperor at this was a little startled, saying: 'God forbid that I should, for the love of gold, destroy the tower which may truly be said to be the property of the Roman Empire.' The master answered that it would be great imprudence to hazard so rich and excellent a treasure as the tower was, only to gain another lesser treasure that was hidden in the earth; but if it might be obtained without damaging the tower, then it would be indiscretion to let it lie there; 'And I dare undertake,' said

he, 'to dig under the foundation without the least prejudice in the world to the tower.' The emperor hearing this, was overjoyed, and in the night they were let into the tower, which, with the utmost expedition and diligence, they undermined, and early in the morning mounted their horses and rode away to their own country, and before they were all out of the city of Rome the tower fell down, and thus by the villainy of these three masters was the wonder of the world and the prop of Rome destroyed. The senators in great consternation go to the emperor to know the reason of the tower's being destroyed, who answered: 'Three treacherous wise masters, pretending to be soothsayers, persuaded me that a prodigious quantity of gold was hid under the foundation, which they would discover without any hurt to the tower or the statues, and they have deceived me.' These masters returning home were received with joy and greatly rewarded, and it was not long before the enemy came against the Romans and took the city, and the Emperor Octavius had hardly the liberty to make his escape, who from being a powerful prince was reduced to turn schoolmaster and teach publicly in the island of Merlin."

SEVENTH—VIRGIL, THE LOVER

I

That the character of Virgil, the magician, came to be looked on—like that of the devil in the mysteries—as one to be made ludicrous, is shown in the development of the only tale in which he figured as a lover. There is no written report nor tradition that warrants the applying of this absurd mediæval invention to Virgil. Nothing that has descended from antique times casts any light upon the privacy of Virgil's life in a matter respecting which the Romans as a rule were not overdelicate. Suetonius, perhaps, and Apuleius and other scandal-mongers of the early centuries, gave currency to an accusation that Virgil was guilty of a crime not only against modesty but against reason. Apuleius, in particular, used the anecdote to excuse his own evil practices of which he made no secret. But beyond the very dubious testimony of these writers, and an inference drawn from one of Virgil's poems, there is nothing to countenance the libel. There is no more self-accusation in the *Alexis* than in the *Religio Medici*, the author of which could say that at the age of thirty he had never yet been drawn by the love of woman, though he loved

his friend as he did his soul or his God. One who can misinterpret such expressions simply exposes the mark of the beast in his own forehead. His words prove nothing except against himself. While Virgil's relations with women are unknown, his disposition toward them as evinced in his portrayal of Dido and Lavinia, gentle far beyond the measure of the Latin genius, is yet plainly that of good-natured contempt, mingled with the diffident and timid aversion of a confirmed bachelor. One can read between the lines how Virgil would have shrunk from a rich, passionate feminine nature like that of the Carthaginian queen. Her salutation would have been far more to be dreaded by him than the noisy plaudits of the crowds that followed him in the street. He might not have run away from such a woman, but there is not a doubt that he would have wished to do so. The general tenor of his life and the tendency of his poetry give the strongest testimony to the purity of his mind.* But in later ages when the reputation of a magician had been fastened upon him, it was natural that all the fancies with which professors of the black art were invested should be interwoven with his legendary biography. It remained for the French and German romancers to connect with the name of Virgil a disreputable tale which had often been told of other notable persons. To understand why this tale should have been an agreeable one to the taste of mediæval readers, the disposition of the middle ages toward woman must be comprehended. St. Bernard put all the brutality of five hundred years into an aphorism when he said that the carnal-

*The remark of Servius, *Uno tantum morbo laborabat, nam impatiens libidini fuit* [See *Masvicii Virgilius*, Vol. I., p. 304], does not militate against the testimony of Virgil's own writings, for it is not the man who yields to every assault of his passions who knows their strength, but the man who resists and becomes impatient of the conflict.

minded woman, meaning every woman who was not of the religious, *est organum Satani*, "Is the instrument of the devil." This emphatic sentence is one of the most significant in mediæval literature. It is the epitome of volumes that were written and a key to the most unpleasant secrets of life in the dark ages. Those who maintain that woman owes much to the church in those centuries, if they desire to be accurate, should make a distinction between the recognized and the unrecognized forces of religion. The church, as organized, was a foe of the family, and, therefore, of woman. In its priesthood and in its religious orders, its tendency was to turn the world into one vast hermitage. The fathers and ecclesiastical writers exalted celibacy as the only state in which man could approach perfection; even, when most moderate, asserting with Olympiodorus, the monk, that while marriage was not to be altogether condemned, yet celibacy was worthy of all praise; thus they advocated not only what was absurd, but what was thoroughly immoral, and brought the idea of perfection into conflict with natural and social laws. Chivalry, the complement of mediæval asceticism, by an opposite course, weakened the conjugal bond, depriving the wife of dignity, and refusing to her the highest motive for honesty and self-respect. In spite of some fragments of literature which portrayed woman in her purity, in spite of the extravagant homage paid to her in the courts of love and in the tournaments, she was never more wickedly insulted than during the reign of gallantry and under the shadow of monkery. An incredible number of tales and witticisms, for the most part trifling and obscene, were invented to her discredit. The worst of these furnished not only the humor of the strolling player and the story teller, but gave pungency to

the sermons of the times. The painters who decorated the churches were not ashamed to take these tales as the theme of their pictures. When worship was thus disgraced, how could Virgil hope to escape?

II

One of these tales was taken as the basis of the legend respecting Virgil's relations with women. In the earliest and most common form of the narrative, Virgil was represented as enamored of the emperor's daughter. She did not sympathize with his ardent expressions of love. Feigning, however, to accede to his wishes, that she might the more severely punish him for his presumption, she proposed to introduce him secretly into her chamber, by drawing him up in a basket to the window of the tower where she lived. Virgil eagerly agreed to this plan, and at the hour designated promptly bestowed himself in the basket, which he found swinging at the foot of the tower according to the lady's promise. All went well enough until he had been drawn half way up to the window. There the princess and her women left him, taunting him and mocking his prayers for release. He swung in mid air until daybreak. The people of the city, who were all familiar with the figure of so renowned a man, were first startled, then amused by the predicament in which they found him. This incident did not end with the laughter and gibes of the populace; for the emperor having been informed of the matter released Virgil from his unique prison, with the intention of ordering him to be beheaded. Virgil, as soon as he placed his feet on solid ground, found means of escape by the use of his magical arts. The insult that had been put

upon him rankled in his mind, however, and in order to prepare the way for vengeance, the magician caused all the fires in Rome to go out, and made it impossible to light them again, except by the public shame and exposure of the emperor's daughter. The legend, as thus made up, is manifestly composed of two parts which are ill-fitted to be together. The first part belongs with those inventions of mediæval humor in which Adam, David, Samson, Hercules, Hippocrates, Aristotle and other men of renown were the victims of a ridiculous trick originating in the subtle craftiness and instinctive malice of womankind. For example, the grave Aristotle, according to Adam de la Halle and many other writers, got down on all-fours in order that a woman might bridle, saddle and ride him as though he were a horse. These inventions are a commonplace of satiric poetry in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The second part was among the stories common in Europe long before it was connected with the name of Virgil. In an ancient account of St. Leo Thaumaturge it was told of Heliodorus, a reputed magician, who lived in Sicily in the eighth century. As this account was written first in Greek and as many of the incidents in the career of the extremely wicked Heliodorus were said to have taken place at Constantinople, there is little room to doubt that the particular story in question belongs to Grecian antiquity, from which it descended to both the oriental and the European literature of later times. It is said to be part of a Persian tale concerning a Khan of Turkestan, which has been translated into French by Defremery. The two parts of the legend may have been associated with Virgil's name separately in the first place—for the trick played by the woman hardly seems artful enough to have deceived a magician such as Virgil is afterward shown to

be. They appeared together for the first time so far as known in a Latin work of the twelfth century. Jans Enenkel, in his *Weltbuch*, narrated them, and they were subsequently repeated in the French poem *Renars Contrefait*, and in numerous writings of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, French and German most frequently, but also in Spanish, Italian and English. The legend was made a part, not only of those works that professed to treat of the Virgilian legends, but also of narratives in prose and verse, where one had little reason to expect it. As a rule Virgil was represented to have been unsuccessful in his suit, but Ticknor in *A History of Spanish Literature* cites a ballad in which punishment was said to have been visited upon him for his success. Sometimes the story was told merely as a joke; sometimes as an example to enforce exhortations against the sin of carnality. The Spanish poet Juan Ruiz de Hita, writing about 1313, recalled the legend in a discourse upon this theme which seems to have been as fruitful in disquisitions as it was in offences. With the highly useful attachment of a moral so plain that innocence itself could not misinterpret the fable, it was told and retold to weariness in literature; presented over and over again in church pictures, and was made the subject of elaborate works by masters in art. A more pleasing form of the second part of the legend was a tale in which Virgil was represented as having gone about Rome in disguise that he might test the hospitality of the people. He was kindly treated by one family only, the members of which were miserably poor. In order to punish the uncharitable multitude, he extinguished all the fires in the city save the one on the hospitable hearth The poor family sold live coals to their neighbors and were by this means raised from penury to affluence.

III

The legend which has been alluded to was not the only one that placed Virgil in relation with the female sex. Appeals to the judgment of God, by ordeals in which truth and justice were supposed to be upheld by a miracle, were a matter of universal custom. The dishonorable position in which woman had been placed by the public opinion of the times caused her to be a frequent victim of some brutal test of this kind. The lightest rumor affecting her purity was enough to subject her to a trial from which only her own acuteness or the arm of some willing champion could rescue her. Literature was permeated with this distrust of woman, and well it might be, for it was to an extent unknown in any other period, the product of celibacy. It was perfectly natural that writers whose whole education had been such as to make them incapable of understanding the most important facts in the science of human nature should have imputed their own impotent and malicious cynicism to a character so celebrated as that of Virgil. How this was done may be seen in the *Dolopathos* at the place where the poet-astrologer is introduced to save the life of his pupil, Lucimien. The prince was about to be burned at the stake because of the accusations made against him by his stepmother. Virgil rushed to the place of torture, crying out to the king to spare an innocent life. Dolopathos hesitated, and the wise man upbraided him for his folly in trusting the words of women, who are more expert in wickedness than all other creatures together. Evil is the very nature of woman, he declares; no foolhardiness in sin is impossible to her disposition, and she has no rival in disloyalty and treason, in vices and cruelties, in cunning and hatred. His speech to the queen is

a diatribe on the sex, the more bitter because it was added to the obnoxious pedantry which had been displayed by the seven counsellors in their successive appeals to the king. Then to illustrate the cunning of woman when she is bent upon deceit, Virgil is made to tell a story which bears a general likeness to the one known under the title of The Two Dreams in the ordinary versions of *The Seven Wise Men*, but while the latter is of oriental origin, the former, as put in the mouth of Virgil, is obviously a Greek invention. The device of the two dreams, one by the lover, the other by his mistress, in which they are made aware each of the other's existence, is replaced with an idea in harmony with the extreme love of the Greeks for statuary. Virgil represents that in his youth he had the acquaintance of the son of a senator at Rome. Though this young man had every inducement to be married, he obstinately neglected all his opportunities. Finally when hard pressed by his friends, he caused a handsome statue to be made and vowed that he would wed no woman unless she resembled in appearance this inanimate figure. Not long afterward a party of Greek sailors shipwrecked on the Italian coast made their way to Rome. When they saw the statue they expressed great surprise at its likeness to the wife of their ruler, and related how the husband, on account of jealousy, kept her immured in a tower from which there seemed to be no way of escape. The son of the senator, of course, went to free the young woman from her imprisonment. Without much trouble he found the tower, made the prisoner aware of his purpose and of the extraordinary manner in which he had been led to seek her out. The jealous old lord was conveniently stupid, and in due time the young Roman and the wife escaped. As soon as she espied the statue, which was so just a counterpart of her own

face and figure, she hit upon a stratagem by which pursuit might be foiled. When the husband came to ask justice of the Romans, the senator's son pointed to the statue and said:

"See! For my sin and hers, she has been turned to stone."

The old lord, triumphant in the thought that the woman's wickedness went not unpunished, seized the statue, draped it in costly cloths and carried it back to his tower. It was to be expected that a woman so skillful in deceit would give her new lover the same trouble which she had caused the old one. But before touching the remainder of Virgil's narrative, it will not be out of place to show that the portion already presented was, as has been said, Greek in its origin. There is yet extant a poem of the fourteenth century in Latin, the whole of which has, perhaps, never been printed, that appears to be a close imitation of a Greek original. Zeno of Sidon visits Philo, a wealthy Greek, and is overcome with jealous terror at the sight of a statue of Parian marble, richly clothed and spangled with jewels, because it resembles his own wife. Foolishly he discloses the cause of his illness to Philo, and on his return home relates the adventure to his wife. Not long afterward Philo goes to Sidon and by a singular artifice carries off the wife of Zeno. In this form the tale needs none of the additions about the gloomy tower and the imprisoned woman, the wandering lover disguised as minstrel or palmer, and other things characteristic of feudal times. It is a picture of the free life in the Greek cities. With its luxurious disbelief in virtue, Herbers fused the boorish contempt for woman characteristic of his own age. No sooner was the young Roman married than he became excessively jealous of the woman whom he had won. He caused a castle to be built with walls like those which the Saracens constructed, and in this prison

he placed his wife. She made no objection; on the contrary, she pretended to be pleased; but, as Virgil is made to say, the greater the gaiety of a woman, the more courage she has for deeds of wicked folly. She contrived by coquetries to put her husband in a suspicious mood. Then she pretended to throw herself from the window of her prison. Alarmed by the noise which she made in casting a stone to the ground, the husband entered the room to see if she was gone. She was hidden behind a pillar. Slipping out of the open door, she barred it securely, and thus taught her husband a lesson which, it is to be hoped, he did not forget. The argument of all this is that it is impossible for the mind of man to be prepared for the tricks of which woman is capable; therefore, it was a mark of great weakness in King Dolopathos to yield at the solicitations of his deceitful spouse. As soon as Virgil began to speak the queen and her damsels fell to trembling. Pale with fright, they awaited the decision of the judges, who now found it convenient to reverse their former opinion. Then Lucimien broke the silence which he had kept for seven days and told his story of the interview with the queen. The women, speechless with terror, were cast into the fire, and, as a final touch of mediæval cruelty, the romancer adds that nobody had any pity for them; neither father, nor mother, nor friend showed compassion; not a prayer was offered for them; the poet himself wasted too much time in describing their fate, so he says, in view of the fact that many things of importance remained for him to tell.

Thus at the outset of that literary movement which culminated in the magical biography of Virgil, he was made to appear, like many of the saints, as an adversary of womankind. The vulgar notions on this subject led to the invention of many

popular tales, among which was one that became associated with Virgil's name. It was said that he set up in Rome a statue with an open mouth to which women were brought to testify when their honesty was in question. If they asserted their innocence of the charge made against them, they were obliged to maintain the truth of their statement by an oath taken while their fingers were thrust into the mouth of the statue. When a woman swore falsely, the stone jaws of the statue came together and her maimed hand disclosed her perjury. Here again the story tellers illustrated the cunning of the sex by relating that once a woman of rank was accused by her husband of being unfaithful to him. Finding that she must face the ordeal, she instructed her lover to feign madness, and to seize her in the presence of the statue. Her husband rescued her with difficulty from the clutches of the supposititious maniac. Pretending the utmost shame because of this incident, the woman swore that she had never suffered the embrace of any man save her husband and this insane person whom all had seen, and confirmed her oath by withdrawing her fingers unhurt from the mouth of the statue. Even Virgil in this case was compelled to acknowledge that he had been outwitted. The author of an anonymous German poem, written in the fourteenth century, in describing this statue, remarked that there were many women in Rome who bore its mark upon them. He then went on to tell of an empress who took advantage of her husband's absence to renew her acquaintance with a knight. The emperor, though far away upon the sea with his knights and nobles, engaged in an important enterprise, went with only half a heart, because he was tormented with the thought of his wife's dishonor which he dreaded far more than his own death. In his anxiety he

consulted a wise man in his train, and this personage advised an immediate return to Rome. The emperor followed this counsel. Upon reaching Rome, he demanded of the empress a strict account of her conduct. She declared that she had done no wrong, and he, not yet convinced, replied that she must be tried by the statue so that all mankind might know her innocence, and that his knights might see how pure a wife she was. At this point the story as already related is taken up. After the empress went through the scene before the statue, she placed her fingers in its mouth with this naive address: "Now, listen, statue, and mark me well. I stand here for truth, for honor, for life, that thou canst find no fault in me; for no man has ever come near me, save only the emperor and this crazy man, whom all have seen. Now, mark me, statue, what I say to thee, for I swear to the truth. If I swear falsely, punish me." The statue was motionless, and the empress, withdrawing her hand, exclaimed: "There, my lord, don't you see you have wronged me? My fingers are not hurt." The emperor begged her pardon and they celebrated their reconciliation by breaking the image to pieces.

The statue thus attributed to Virgil's magic was not wholly a creature of the imagination. The legend was associated for many generations with an ancient sculptured head which still exists among the relics of Rome. In the *Mirabilia Urbis Romæ*, this head was said to have pronounced oracles. In the German version of that work, made in the fifteenth century, the name of Virgil and the account of the way the stone lost its efficacy were added to the simple remark with which the compiler of the Latin guide-book had been content. The moral attached to the story led to a new interpretation of

other stories. For example, Hans Sachs, the cobbler-poet of Germany, taking up the familiar story of the magic bridge, made out that Virgil built a bridge upon which no woman who had been unfaithful to her marriage vows could walk with safety.

IV

After the reputation of Virgil as a magician became fixed, that is, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the story of his intrigue with the daughter of the emperor was a theme naturally to be enlarged upon. It was related that when the Romans had relighted their fires, they committed the magician to prison. He escaped by making the picture of a ship on the walls of his cell and converting it into a real ship by an incantation. So far the story was a common one. It had been told of the Sicilian Heliodorus, who, when he was commanded to go to Constantinople for trial on the charge of being an enchanter, conjured up a vessel which carried him and his guards thither in an incredibly brief space of time. The notion of magic ships was familiar to the Greeks. Macrobius called attention to the confusion of mind that had arisen through the use of the same words to describe both drinking vessels and sailing vessels, and even thought it necessary to discredit the story related by two Greek writers, Panyasis and Pherecydes, that Hercules made a voyage to the island of Erytheia in a bowl. "My idea is," says he, "that Hercules crossed the sea not in a drinking cup, but in a ship, the name of which was *Scyphus*, a can." Nearly all the numerous words by which the Greeks distinguished the different forms of hollow-ware in use among them were also taken

to describe boats. The transition from one thing to the other easily followed the transition from one meaning to the other, as in the case of Hercules, to be succeeded in due time by the notion that the conversion of one thing into the other was due to magic. This belief was frequently mentioned in popular lore, specially that of Russia, which owes not a little of its superstition to the Byzantines. Virgil not only effected his own escape, but carried off his fellow prisoners. By another account it appears that Virgil liberated himself from prison by means of a charm said over a large bowl or shell full of sea water. In this form also the incident was a feature of the pretended biography of Heliodorus, who was, as has been remarked, a prototype of the magician Virgil. Aliprando, the Mantuan poet, added to this tale a figment not uncommon in stories of magic, to the effect that Virgil, while flying over the sea in his shell, ordered one of his familiar spirits to fetch him the victuals from Octavian's table. It remained, however, for Jean d'Outremeuse to develop from these fragments a systematic fiction as one of the episodes in his *Ly Myreur des Histors*. He saw the inconsistency of the tale as it had been rudely put together by the earlier romancers. Rejecting those features which could not be made to agree with the notion of Virgil's skill in necromancy, he invented new details to suit the idea which he had formed of a magician. Evil and selfish as Virgil was, he drew people to him in spite of themselves. Febilla, the daughter of Julius Cæsar, fell in love with him upon mere hearsay. Indeed, no woman was ever overcome with greater ease. She sent word to Virgil that she wished him to visit her. Upon his arrival the imperial damsel, laying aside all modesty, said frankly: "Sir Virgil, tell me if you love

me; for if you do, I am yours, either wife or mistress." Virgil with equal frankness replied that as for a wife, he was not in the mind, but that he would willingly accept the companionship of so lovely a maiden as Febilla on any other terms. Thus began between them an intrigue which lasted a long time. In the meanwhile, Virgil became famous by reason of the prodigies which he performed, and Febilla began to entertain the hope that she might become his lawful wife. Every time that she alluded to the subject, however—and that was by no means rarely—Virgil would answer that he had something else to think about just then; or, that his studies were such as did not admit of his marrying; if the time ever came when he wished to marry, she should be his wife. But that time did not come. Febilla grew importunate, but Virgil continued to treat the matter with indifference. Finally, weary of being beguiled with a promise never to be fulfilled, Febilla one day invented a story that her father had discovered all, and was about to punish both herself and her lover. The magician only laughed and said that if Febilla was afraid, she was welcome to go. He should like her to stay, if she would only stop her clatter on the subject of marriage. The lady, though very angry, pretended to be satisfied. But she meditated vengeance. Feigning that her father, in order to stop all intercourse between her and Virgil, was about to shut her up in a castle, she suggested that the magician could still visit her by means of a basket in which he could be drawn up to her window. Virgil foresaw what would happen, but agreed to her plan as though ignorant of its purpose. Instead of getting into the basket himself, he caused one of his familiar spirits to take his place, in a shape that seemed to be Virgil's own. The devil acted his part to perfection. The basket

swung in mid air until morning, when the emperor came to punish the seducer of his daughter. He drew his sword and clove the head which he supposed was Virgil's. What was his astonishment to see issue from the wound, not blood, but a smoke so dense and in so great a volume that soon the whole city was in darkness. Not content with this exploit, Virgil put out all the fires of the city and then departed. At the urgent request of the emperor and the people of Rome, he returned and restored the fires. But he could not refrain from a brutal jest on Febilla. He cast over a temple frequented by women so potent a spell that every woman who entered its portals was obliged to proclaim what she had hitherto held in inviolable secrecy.* Febilla, caught in this trap, made herself ridiculous by a minute description of her undraped figure. The death of Julius Cæsar was followed by the accession of Octavian to the throne in spite of the widow who desired to reign. She plotted with her daughter Febilla to destroy Octavian and his great ally, Virgil. The new emperor and his counsellor were invited to a banquet, where they were to be assassinated. Virgil penetrated the conspiracy, and had himself and Octavian personated at the entertainment by demons. The sanguinary ladies, after committing the murder, found that they had wreaked their vengeance only on the carcasses of two huge dogs. One feature of the plot was not revealed to Virgil's art at the outset—namely, that the

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*A device of this kind is not unknown to the stage. Beckford [*Travels in Portugal*, Letter xx.] says: "In some of our pantomimes, if I recollect rightly, harlequin applies a touchstone to his adversaries, and by its magic influence draws truth from them in spite of propriety or interest. The lawyer confesses to having fingered a bribe, the soldier his flight in the day of battle and the whining methodistical dowager her frequent recourse to the bottle of inspiration."

Senate was privy to it. In his wrath upon discovering this fact, he quitted Rome, bearing away the fire and leaving word to the Romans that they must light their torches from the body of Febilla. She died of shame and madness at being subjected to the ill treatment of the multitude.

V

In the popular history of Virgil, the magician, which was written in French and afterward transferred with more or less change in subject-matter to nearly all the languages of Northern Europe, the story of the basket reappeared, unaffected by the elaborate fancies of Jean d'Outremeuse. The Mouth of Truth, however, was said to belong to a serpent of bronze. Virgil himself destroyed this image when he found that a woman was cunning enough to baffle his magic. He was said to have married soon after his venture with the basket. Strange occurrences followed the marriage. The magician became disgusted with the conduct of the Roman women. In order to work a reformation among them, he moulded a statue and placed it high in the air. It could not fall because it was enchanted. The people of Rome could not open a door or a window without catching a glimpse of it. For mere beauty of sculpture such a thing might have been borne; but this statue had the property that it drove all unchaste thoughts from the minds of women, when they saw it, no matter how quickly they turned their heads away. So they besought Virgil's wife to fetch it down and break the power of its enchantment. She found means to carry out their wishes. Virgil raised the image again, and restored the spell. Again the wife cast it down, but this time

she was seen by her husband, who angrily put her away, exclaiming:

"The devil satisfy you, for I did it for the best. I shall never more meddle, but let the women have their way."

He had heard often of the beauty of the Sultan's daughter, and, after separating from his wife, he determined to visit Babylon. So he swung his magic bridge over the sea and was soon in the presence of the young woman who was famous the world over for her good looks. She willingly consented to return with Virgil to his native land. He showed her all his possessions. While she was amusing herself in this manner, it may well be supposed that Babylon was in an uproar. The Sultan, when he found not his daughter, was sorrowful. The palace and the city were searched in every part. As unexpectedly as she went away, so with equal suddenness the young woman reappeared in her father's palace. The only account which she could give of her wanderings was that a man of fair complexion had carried her over land and over sea to his own domain. What land it was that she had visited she could not tell, as she saw neither man nor woman nor any living creature save the man who carried her away. The Sultan, taking it for granted that the stranger would repeat his visit to Babylon, instructed his daughter to bring back from the unknown land some fruits by which it might be discovered whither she was taken. She obeyed this injunction and her father easily divined that her journeys ended in the country near the eastern side of France; that is, the Italy of feudal times. When the princess returned for the second time, she was instructed to give the stranger, if he came again, a drink that would cause him to sleep so that he might be taken and forced to explain what manner of man he

was. But when he was made a prisoner, the Sultan, with a cruelty not oriental but thoroughly characteristic of mediæval Europe, determined to burn him at the stake. The daughter declared that she would share the prisoner's fate.

"So you shall," exclaimed the despot; "I have other daughters."

But Virgil, though he lacked the cunning to evade his captors in the first place, was not to be punished so easily. He caused what seemed to be a great flood to overflow the city,* and while the Sultan and his officers and soldiers were going through the motions of swimming in the dust, thinking themselves to be in imminent danger of drowning, the magician strode away with the princess on his enchanted bridge, seeming to those below him to be walking upon nothing. Upon returning to Rome, Virgil bethought himself how he should dispose of the Sultan's daughter. He built the town of Naples, setting the foundation of it upon eggs. He raised in the midst of the city a square tower surmounted with an apple stuck upon an iron staff. In the English version this is called "a napyll" suggesting a quaint etymology for the name of the city. On the top of the iron staff Virgil placed a bottle, and on the bottle an egg. When the egg stirred the town of Naples quaked, and it was believed that if it were broken the city would be swallowed up. Virgil stored his treasures in Naples and gave the city to the Sultan's daughter. With such a dowry she was not long in finding a husband in the person of a Spanish nobleman. Thus the tale is brought into

*A trick often mentioned in the biographies of magicians. There is a story of Virgil having punished some women who had offended him, by subjecting them to this delusion. One might almost suspect that this superstition originated in some oriental fancies about the mirage.

a curious relationship with political events which must have been known to the narrator in connection with the claims of Spain to the possession of Southern Italy.

VI

The Spanish romance of Virgil differed from all the other tales concerning him in that every characteristic of the historic, the traditional and even the legendary Virgil gave place to a clumsy lover with all the whimsical chivalry and ceremony proper to a compatriot of Quixote. To the author of this absurd tale Virgil wore the guise of a good hidalgo, who endured imprisonment patiently for the sake of his inamorata. His punishment came about in this way: Having conceived a violent passion for Isabella, a lady of the court, he offended the punctilious manners of the king whom he served by a too public display of his affection. For this indecorum he was arrested, tried and condemned on a charge of high treason. He remained in prison, before he was again remembered by the king, full seven years. On a Sunday when all the grandees were the guests of the king, the strangely defective royal memory was suddenly quickened at the dinner table!

"My lords," exclaimed the king, "and Virgil, where is he?"

One of the noblemen, who had been Virgil's friend, ventured to reply: "Your majesty has him in prison."

"Come," said his majesty, "let us dine quickly, that we may visit him."

"Not a mouthful will I eat until he is with us," exclaimed the queen. So to the prison they went, and when they came to Virgil's cell they asked him how he did, and he replied:

"Senors, I have nothing to do, save comb my hair and my beard. Here they grew and here they are like to become gray. To-day seven years have gone since your majesty had me arrested."

"Hush, Virgil," whispered the courtiers, alarmed at his boldness, "of ten years there yet remain three."

"But," continued the prisoner, submissively, "if your majesty wills it, here I shall remain all my life."

"Virgil," said the king, "in recompense of the miseries you have suffered, and as a reward for your patience, you shall this day eat at our table."

Virgil protested that he had no clothes fit to wear, but the king would take no refusal. Newly attired in robes suitable to his rank, the prisoner was led to the palace. The king opened his heart still more in the merriment and kindly feeling of the feast, and commanded that Virgil and the Donna Isabella should be married without delay. To cap the climax of absurdity, it is gravely stated that the ceremony was performed in the cathedral by his grace, the archbishop.

All these tales have this value: that they disclose clearly the national, or rather the racial tendencies out of which they sprang. These peculiarities might have been concealed in narratives more elaborate. Even the obstinate prejudice of the Teuton against the Roman finds a distinct expression in the poem of the anonymous German who declared in effect that the women of Rome were notoriously unfaithful. But it is not surprising that when curiosity was reawakened concerning the Virgil of history, it should have seemed impossible for these tales to have been attached even by the bonds of legend and superstition to the fame of the Mantuan, nor

that learned men should have looked among the many Virgils who were known in mediæval literature for a personality better suited to such inventions than was that of the Augustan poet.

EIGHTH—VIRGIL, THE PROPHET

I

Virgil lived too long before the beginning of the controversy between paganism and Christianity to afford an opportunity for the immediate partisan use of his name and reputation. He could not be enrolled as an adherent of either party, because he never had the opportunity of choosing between them. But the post-classical and mediæval world looked upon him as a poet of prophetic insight, who contained within himself all the potentialities of wisdom. He was called The Poet, as if no other existed; The Roman, as if the ideal of the commonwealth were embodied in him; The Perfect in Style, with whom no other writer could be compared; The Philosopher, who grasped the ideas of all things; The Wise One, whose comprehension seemed to other mortals unlimited; and, least agreeable title to a poet, he was called The Learned, as having mastered the lore of humanity. His writings became the Bible of a race. The mysteries of Roman priestcraft, the processes of divination, the science of the stars, were all found in his works. The powers of a magician, and, subsequently, the name were attributed to him. Christians,

learned as well as unlearned, accepting these opinions did not attempt to separate the Virgil of history from the Virgil of tradition. Such criticism would have been impossible. Mankind was, in fact, not capable of making a distinction between the real and the unreal. The heathen deities were as truly existent in the imagination of the early Christian convert as in that of his polytheistic neighbor. So the heathen oracles were studied as the utterances of a superhuman intelligence, more or less vicious, which pointed in spite of itself to the events of the New Dispensation. The whole area of profane literature was traversed in search of passages to be interpreted in harmony with the teachings of Scripture. As to Virgil, the reasoning was obvious that, gifted as he was with almost supernatural powers, and with a prophetic insight, he must have been cognizant of the stupendous changes about to be wrought in the world. The method by which in course of time he was made to do duty as a witness for Christianity was, in some aspects, little to the credit of Christian scholars; the only excuse for this was the prevalence of literary dishonesty among men of all creeds. Celsus had just grounds for reproaching the Christians with having corrupted the Sibylline books to suit their own views, and Origen could reply with equal truth that the pagans and Jews had already vitiated the original poems by their interpolations to such an extent that the "unadorned earnest words" heard by Heraclitus were no longer to be found in these writings. The popularity of these fictions led to the composition of spurious gospels, spurious Orphic hymns, spurious treatises attributed to men famous in ancient literature which affected for centuries the opinions even of the most learned. A particular point in the sibyllines, upon which Christians fixed their attention was the prediction

of a last golden age of the world when the simplicity and purity of the first men were to be recovered, and it was this prediction, repeated by Virgil on the authority, as they thought, of the sacred books of Rome (*Ultima Cumæi venit jam carminis ætas*), that attracted them especially to his fourth eclogue.

To the patriotic Roman citizen this poem seemed a prophetic outburst in view of the great destiny which had been anticipated for Rome from the first. Doubtless Virgil had intended it to be so understood. To heighten the beauty of his picture, he appropriated the fancies and superstition of popular lore; for, unlike his other poems, the fourth eclogue can be traced to no Greek or Latin work of an earlier time, and its real source may have been a simple tradition, perhaps embodied in rude verse, that existed among the people of Cumæ, where the sibyl was supposed to have once had her mysteries.

The less hopeful Horace, following the same line of thought, genially reminded the Romans that if they would realize such a dream of unmingled felicity they must go to a new world. Half in jest he proposed in his sixteenth epode that they should all flee to the Fortunate Isles, binding themselves by a mutual oath never to return. They would go to a land where nature yielded all her treasures without care or labor, where the harvest matured without cultivation, where grapes and figs and olives ripened of themselves, where honey was to be found in the recesses of the hollow tree, where the goats ran to the milking pail unbidden, where there were no ravening beasts, no noxious winds, no fell diseases; where Argo never came, nor Ulysses, nor Medea; and where commerce was unknown. In all this Horace meant to smile at the dreams which the Romans cherished, and which Virgil encouraged. He desired his readers to understand that there

was no place on earth of unmingled blessedness. Above all, while they had the world to-conquer and rule, they must not hope for the enjoyment of unlaborious ease. If he had not meant to be gently ironical, he would not have proposed the comical pledge to his imagined voyagers that they should agree to return to Italy only when the rocks swam on the surface of the sea, when the rivers flowed over the mountains, when tigers herded with deer and kites harmonized with doves, when the flocks ceased to dread the lions and the goats took to swimming like fishes.

But the covert rebuke of Horace went unheeded. The Romans throughout their history indulged the vain hope of a golden empire, where they would rule and all the world should be at peace. Claudian, the last of the classic poets, boldly announced the immediate coming of the happy years so long expected. He pictured the cavern of eternity around which the endless serpent coiled, while fruitful nature stood before the entrance. The aged man, mysterious embodiment of fate, sat within, ordering with uplifted hand the courses of the stars. He it was who established the laws by which all things subsisted. Behind him, emerging from the subterranean darkness, were seen the childish figures of the years each waiting in turn to go forth. From among them Fate selected the golden years to attend the consulship of Stilicho, to renew the virtue and happiness of the first ages, and the pristine fertility of the earth, to temper the seasons to the continued mildness of spring, and to restrain those signs of the Zodiac that cause the bitter cold of winter and the scorching heat of summer.

A century changed the scene altogether. Men learned the emptiness of that imperial power in which they trusted.

Indescribable ruin overwhelmed the delicate structures raised by the fancy of the great poets. Boethius only mentioned the golden age to regret that its simplicity and virtue and kindliness could never again be known upon the earth. Those were days, he said, when men had not learned to mingle their wine with honey, when their simplicity was uncorrupted by luxurious living. Commerce was unknown and war was not waged, for there was nothing to be gained by it. And he added: "Would that our age might return to those ancient virtues, but the love of gain burns more fiercely than the fires of Etna."

II

We may well believe that among the many influences to which men's views of life were subjected at the close of classic times—influences of the most diverse and eccentric character, the sublimated theories of Plato's disciples, Egyptian hierophantism, oriental legends distorted by the Gnostics and the followers of Mani, the Hebrew prophecies, the mysticism of Apollonius and Apuleius and the supposititious Hermes, the prophetic verses that had obtained a place in popular tradition, and the allegories inculcated by the secret orders of the pagan priesthood—that among all these no single work exercised a greater power than Virgil's *Pollio*. Events obscured the meaning which Virgil intended to convey, without diminishing the hold taken by the eclogue on the imagination of mankind. An unknown writer, taking advantage of the renown of Virgil and of the obscurities of the poem, transferred it to the Greek language; but, instead of translating the original, made a paraphrase in which his impressions were

made to appear as the poet's own thoughts. It was this paraphrase which Constantine is said to have used in his address to the Congregation of the Faithful, a work that did more to place the fourth eclogue in a legendary relation with Christianity than all other influences put together. In order to show the liberty taken with Virgil by the Greek paraphrast, it will be most convenient, perhaps, to analyze the two poems together, since they have both been often interpreted separately. Virgil began by calling on the muses of Sicily—that is, those who had inspired the genius of Theocritus—to aid him now in a work higher than any he had yet attempted; the lowly shrub and humble tamarisk were not to be the burden of this song; although it was of the forest, it must be worthy of the Consul Pollio, to whom it was dedicated. In the paraphrase, this invocation was confined to a single verse and all allusion to Pollio was avoided. The Greek, however, seized upon the verses which declared that the last age, spoken of by the Cumæan sibyl, was approaching, and that a great race was about to arise, the fullness of time having come. Virgil's enigmatic phrase, "A virgin comes," suggested doubtless by Hesiod's personification of justice, was accepted, while the equally important allusion to the reign of Saturn as the model of the coming empire was passed over in silence. The Roman poet invoked the favor of chaste Lucina, whose emblem was the moon, in behalf of the babe soon to be born; the Greek imitator called upon the moon, the light bearer, to adore the Child. He translated with exactness the words of Maro in describing the child as the overthrower of the age of iron and the founder of a golden race, but neglected altogether the Virgilian allusion to Apollo, supposed to refer to Octavian, and was equally oblivious of the apostrophe to

Pollio in which it was predicted that he should see the opening of that glorious time now foretold. To Pollio, Virgil addressed the words: "Under thy guidance, if any vestige of human wickedness remain, they shall at least cease to cause terror to the world." But the paraphrast has transferred the thought to the babe whose future is the theme of the eclogue, and has expanded the purely pagan notion expressed in the words, *sceleris vestigia nostri*, in a manner that could only have been possible to one who understood the Christian doctrine of sin. "Human wounds, the sicknesses and groanings of sinners, are relieved." The Homeric *alitros* is used of sinners instead of the words customary in the Scriptures, but the thought of wounds, sickness and mourning as sin-begotten, rather than divinely sent, which underlies his words is altogether absent from the Latin. Throughout the succeeding passage, however, in which Virgil enlarged upon the characteristics of the happy time now dawning upon the world, the Greek was commendably faithful. The child soon to appear among men should take on himself a divine nature; he should see heroes mingling familiarly with the gods, and should himself be one of them. Under his mild government men were to recover their ancestral virtues. The earth should bring forth for them the rarest flowers; the wandering ivy, the rustic spikenard and the colocasia should grow alongside the blooming acanthus. The she goats should return to the fold and give down their milk unbidden. The timid flocks should no longer fear the lion. From the very cradle (here the Greek, still more expressive, has *spargana* swaddling bands) of the babe should spring living flowers. Serpents should perish and poisonous herbs disappear, and in their place should grow the Assyrian amomum. The wonderful child would learn the praises of heroes and the

deeds of his father, so that he might know what virtue is. The wold untouched should glow with the yellow of the ripening corn, and the purpling grape cluster should hang on the bramble, while honey, like the dew, distilled from the bitter rind of the oak tree. Still a few traces should remain of the olden time. Seafaring men would still pursue their trade, cities would still be surrounded with walls, and the peasant would still follow the plough. Tiphys would come again and Argo, manned by heroes; again must Achilles wage war under the walls of Troy. But when the boy became a man, the sailor would abandon the sea, the merchant would no longer make long voyages to enrich himself. The earth everywhere should be alike fruitful; the soil should not need the harrow, nor the vine the pruning hook, and the ploughman could now release the ox from the yoke. Man would cease to dye the wool in varied colors, for the ram would color his own fleece with purple or with saffron, and the sandyx unbidden should dress the grazing lambs. At this point Virgil introduced the Fates to say that an age so harmonious must continue forever. But Eusebius failed to quote these verses in the Greek, and the paraphrase of the closing lines in which the poet addressed the child directly is so close to the original as to be open to little criticism. This might well be, for these lines have nothing to do with the prophetic discourse which precedes them.

If anything had been needed to convince the early Christians of Virgil's power as a seer, and of his unique relation to Christianity, the address of Constantine must have satisfied them. It was quite natural for the author of the address to enlarge in the same connection upon the sibyllines without anticipating that the effect of this juxtaposition would be in

later times to bring the poet and prophetess into strange companionship. The author of the Æneid was himself to blame for much of this error. He labored to increase the superstitious regard for the sibyl which cool-headed men like Cicero had condemned. He invested the traditions that hung about the neighborhood of Cumæ with all the terror and mystery that his artistic power made him master of, caused the weird priestess to direct Æneas's way through the realm of shadows and appealed to her utterances in order to give the semblance of divine inspiration to his own fancies.

III

The ethnic respect for the sibyl, beginning with these suggestions of the poet, was gradually transferred to Virgil himself by the Christian apologists. Lactantius, who belonged to the same period with Constantine, looked upon the fourth eclogue as a direct translation from the Cumæan sibyl, Erythræa, and interpreted it as a prophetic vision of the entire Christian period, including the second coming of the Saviour. Prophets, he remarked, saw the events of the future as if already past, and so a portion of Virgil's vision remained yet to be fulfilled. It was not a matter of surprise that the thoughts of Virgil should exercise a potent influence upon the mind of Augustine. He confessed with some qualms of conscience that he could not read the story of Dido without tears. In his youth he had a Dido of his own, so to speak, for he ruined and deserted the girl who loved him.

His quotations from the works of the poet were numerous and pertinent. Whether led by the discourse attributed to Constantine or by his own study, he was persuaded that a prophetic

anticipation of Christ's coming was shown in the fourth eclogue. He admitted, however, that Virgil might not have been conscious of the full meaning of his own words, which could be interpreted, indeed, only in the light of history. The phrases used poetically of another person were realized in the character of the Saviour. Then follows a remarkable sentence in which Augustine takes up the sibyllist myth where Constantine left it, and carries it far toward its mediæval completeness. "That he did not say this at the prompting of his own fancy, Virgil tells us in that verse of the fourth eclogue where he says, 'The last age predicted by the Cumæan sibyl has not come,' whence it plainly appears that this had been dictated by the Cumæan sibyl," an unwarranted, though not unnatural inference from Virgil's words. It is not pertinent to enter deeply into the discussion of a question mysterious in itself and clouded by controversy. It will suffice, perhaps, to give in the words of Professor Nettleship the latest theory of criticism as to the identity of the babe concerning whom Virgil prophesied such great things.

"Who is the expected child? He may be either the offspring of Pollio, or Octavianus, who had recently married Scribonia. The allegorizing style of the poem makes any certain interpretation of it nearly impossible, the more so as we have no clue to any Greek model which Vergil can be shown to have followed. Speaking, therefore, with great diffidence, I should say that our best resource is to connect the fourth eclogue with the fifth in which Julius Cæsar is spoken of in the same mystical strain. Does the present poem then refer to the child expected from the recent marriage of Octavianus and Scribonia? There is nothing to stand in the way of such a supposition; while considering the

circumstances of the year, it is very difficult to refer it to the child of Pollio. The peace of Brundisium had apparently put an end to the civil war; Octavianus and Antonius were masters of the Roman world. Of Antonius, Vergil can not possibly be thinking; nor could his language without gross and pointless exaggeration be applied to the offspring of Asinius Pollio. The coming child is spoken of as the offspring of gods, and as destined to walk, as the ruler of men, in the footsteps of his fathers. Now, the family of Asinius Pollio was a provincial one of no great note, whereas the Julii professed to derive their descent from Venus, and, therefore, Jupiter himself. Vergil's language, therefore, may very well apply to the descendants of Julius Cæsar; nor should it be forgotten that in the Sixth Æneid he expressly speaks of Augustus as destined to restore the golden age."

The more common opinion of scholars, however, is that the child spoken of was the son of Pollio, Asinius Gallus, who was an important personage subsequently, in the reign of Tiberius. "This interpretation," writes Professor Sellar, "is supported by the authority of Asconius, who professed to have heard it from Asinius Gallus himself. The objection to this interpretation is that Virgil was not likely to assign to the child of one who, as compared with Octavianus and Anthony, was only a secondary personage in public affairs, the position of 'future ruler of the world' and the function of being the regenerator of his age. Still less could a poem bearing this meaning have been allowed to retain its place among Virgil's works after the ascendency of Augustus became undisputed. Further, the line

Cara deum suboles, magnum Iovis incrementum

(whatever may be its exact meaning) appears an extreme

exaggeration when specially applied to the actual son of a mortal father and mother. These difficulties have led some interpreters to suppose that the child spoken of is an ideal or imaginary representative of the future race. But if we look more closely at the poem, we find that the child is not really spoken of as the future regenerator of the age; he is merely the first born of the new race, which was to be nearer to the gods both in origin and in actual communion with them. Again, the words,

Pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem,

would not convey the same idea in the year 40 B. C. as they would ten or twenty years later. At the time when the poem was written the consulship was still the highest recognized position in the State. The consuls for the year, nominally, at least, wielded the whole power of the Empire. The words *reget orbem* remain as a token that the Republic was not yet entirely extinct. The child is called upon to prepare himself for the great offices of State in the hope that he should in time hold the high place which was now held by his father. The words *patriis virtutibis* imply that he is no ideal being, but the actual son of a well-known father."

But down to a recent period the preponderance of critical opinion was in favor of the supposition entertained by Lactantius and Augustine, that Virgil was the mouth-piece of a prophetic inspiration whose purpose he himself did not understand. Some traditional characteristics of Virgil were well adapted to confirm the mediæval idea of his fitness for the sacred office of a prophet. The tendency of Christianity in those times was to intensify the reverence felt for such ascetic severity and purity of life as had been attributed to Virgil. The gregarious and laughter-loving Neapolitans blundered upon

the Greek name Parthenias as equivalent to Virgilius. The ascription of virginity thus accidentally given was adopted in after ages with all seriousness. In pagan times such personal character was considered the mark of the true philosopher. In the church it came to be looked upon as distinguishing the religious from the worldling, as deserving of reward hereafter and as conferring superhuman powers in this present life. Thus Jerome could say: "It is written that virginity alone knows the counsel of God," and "the reward of virginity is the power of prophecy," as if he were stating universal propositions.

IV

A purely literary movement of the early Christian centuries, also, became an increment of the force that raised Virgil to a legendary place in the church. Throughout the period of grammatical activity, the professors of that science made such use of Virgil that if all the codices of his works were destroyed, it would be very nearly possible to reconstruct the poems from the vast multitude of verses cited as examples of Latin usage. A notable instance of this copious use of Virgil is that of Nonius, a writer at the close of the third century, in whose treatise the poet was cited fifteen hundred times. Striking quotations from Virgil were even more common than phrases from Shakespeare are in the English speaking world of to-day. His verses continued to be recited at the public exhibitions, as late as the sixth century, and it was by no means unusual in the lowest times of the decadence for persons in the schools to be able to repeat accurately from memory his entire poems. It was natural that some device

should be found for utilizing this widespread familiarity with Virgilian literature. Doubtless the first motive of the Latin pedants was to leave nothing undone with Virgil that was done with Homer. The fashion of centonizing became so general as to mark the epoch in literary history. By combining verses and parts of verses, the dexterous but servile versifiers forced the poet to discourse upon subjects the most diverse. The *Ciris*, frequently included among the supposititious works of Virgil, is probably an example of the centonist's art. A tragedy on the story of Medea was constructed in this manner by Ovidius Geta. Ausonius, the most brilliant man of his age, yielded to the taste of the times. He was prevailed upon, although against his own judgment, by the urgent request of the Emperor Valentinian, whom he considered a man of learning. Apologizing to a friend for his production, Ausonius called it a frivolous trifle, of no weight or value, which required neither care nor labor, without genius or maturity of style—an achievement of the memory, more worthy of ridicule than praise. It was a disagreeable thing to have so violated the dignity of Virgil's muse, but what could he do, he exclaimed, in the face of the imperial command? Valentinian had himself done something of the kind, and desired to see how his composition would look beside one by the distinguished Gallic poet. Paulus, the friend to whom Ausonius wrote, was humbly requested to be indulgent in his reading of this continuity of disconnected things, this unity of diverse fragments, this joke patched up with a succession of serious phrases, this bit of originality, every word of which was stolen, and to learn from one who, perhaps, himself needed to be taught the nature of the thing called a cento. Ausonius had a juster idea of the real merit of these eccentric productions than his

contemporaries. His *Epithalamium* is a clever and amusing, though licentious piece. In spite of his condemnation, he must have perceived that the cento had an interest peculiarly its own as distinguished from an original work even of the highest order in that it was replete with reminiscences of the poetic master whose works were followed. Every phrase called up some passage familiar to the readers of those days upon which the memory lingered with fondness. It has been demonstrated in the poems of Gray that a method analogous to that of the centonist is not inconsistent with originality. He rigidly excluded from his verse all expressions that were not sanctioned by the earlier English poets. The result is that the attractiveness of Gray's poems grows with the reader's knowledge of his predecessors. In a far less important sense the same was true of the Virgilian and Homeric centos.

A scholar like Victorinus, upon being converted to Christianity, did not necessarily feel that he was obliged to give up a study which had been the occupation of his life. He chose rather to cast about for a method by which his learning could be made useful to the new faith. The wish was well met in the form of the cento. That Virgil was, consciously or unconsciously, a prophet of the new religion, being accepted; his works took on, to some extent, the aspect of a revelation. Proba Faltonia, a lady of the Anician family, whose rank and wealth and culture made her conversion an event in the history of the church, assumed the credit of having first adapted the verses of Virgil to a Christian purpose. By collating verses and hemistichs from his poems she put the stories of the Old and New Testaments into a new form. As she dedicated her work to Honorius, it is to be inferred that she was a contemporary of Claudian and Ausonius. Having

inherited large estates in Asia from her ancestors, she devoted her income to founding religious houses and churches, so that her literary achievements were only a secondary matter in the estimation of the ecclesiastical writers of the time. The cento of Proba, which comprises seven hundred and nineteen verses, is made up entirely of lines from Virgil, from the Æneid chiefly, but some from the bucolics and georgics. The constraint of such a production sacrificed naturalness and clearness at times to so great a degree that the only way to ascertain the sense is by resorting to the parallel passages of the Biblical narrative. She probably based her work upon the old Latin translation of the Scriptures which went by the name of *Itala*, though it is not impossible that she may have read the version of St. Jerome. Her poem is divided according to the subjects, each subordinate narrative having a superscription of its own. In a work of such a character, Proba must have had in mind a process of reasoning analogous to that from proof texts. Addressing Honorius, she writes:

> Spes orbis, fratrisque decus, dignare, Marone
> Mutato in melius divinum agnoscere sensum,

and in another place:

> Virgilium cecinisse loquar pia munera Christi.

V

We may suppose that the like was true of the poet Eudocia, but the outcome of the process is more remarkable in the brief poem of Sedulius on the "Word made Flesh," in which verses and parts of verses from Virgil are woven with some skill into an account of the birth of Christ. The author of this eccentric production was a native of Ireland, who, having acquired a taste for letters not to be

gratified at home, betook himself to the continent and travelled extensively in Spain, Gaul, Italy, Greece and Asia Minor. He was an ecclesiastic in Spain, a litterateur in Achaia, and finally a rhetorical teacher at Rome. Though all his poetry was in its purpose religious, it evinced throughout a diligent study of classical models. As in the case of Proba, his selections were mainly from the Æneid, though he took not a few verses from the georgics and the eclogues. The introduction, as paraphrased rudely below, will give an idea of the method by which Sedulius appropriated the diction of Virgil, the fragments within quotation marks being those found in Conington's translation of the Æneid:

God "sent at last from Heaven above
The wished-for token of His love;"
From Heaven, "all calm without a cloud,"
He speaks to all the mortal crowd
Words breathing "love's divinest charm."
"Son and Father both" with praises warm
Be sung and honored "for their fame
To Heaven shall elevate our name."
"The sons who from their loins have birth
Shall see one day the whole broad earth,
From main to main, from pole to pole,
Beneath them bow, beneath them roll."
Lest mortal minds should be disturbed,
Untaught of God, with doubts uncurbed,
Descended from his heavenly throne,
God took the form of man unknown,
"To bridal age already grown,
A virgin of a royal race—."

Thus he begins his version of the Gospel story. To Virgil and his companions of the Augustan age the verses of the

Irish rhetorician would have seemed as lame and disjointed, perhaps, as these, but the readers of the fifth and succeeding centuries were incapable of so nice discernment. While it can not well be doubted that Sedulius conceived all of Virgil's poetry to be underlaid with allegory and prophecy, he must also have felt the power of the lines which he quoted in recalling to memory the pictures wherein they had formed a part. Short as the poem is—only one hundred and eleven lines—it is rich in such suggestions. Take these verses from the middle of it:

> Ille dies primus lethi, primusque *salutis*
> Monstrat iter vobis *ad eum*, quem semper acerbum
> Semper honoratum cuncti celebrate faventes.
> Annua vota tamen noctem non amplius unam
> Haud segnes vigilate viri, dapibusque futuris
> Luce palam cumulate piis altaria donis.

Here the only words not from the classic poet are those in italics. The first verse which Sedulius, by the use of *salutis* for *malorum*, has turned into a description of the resurrection, was by Virgil employed to condemn the unfortunate passion of Dido. In the three verses that follow, the Christian writer, while teaching the lesson of reverence for the anniversary of Christ's return from the dead, brings to mind, also, one of the most beautiful passages of the Æneid—that speech of Æneas in which he recalls the day of his father's death.

In the midst of this memory come the words *celebrate faventes* to carry the thought suddenly to that famous feast in Carthage where Æneas related the story of his wanderings. Here and there Sedulius has hit upon verses which copied entire into his poem came to the reader with

almost grotesque form: as, for example, the following passage, nearly all the allusions of which are to the fourth eclogue:

Nascere, precipue tam venturus age Lucifer almum,
Nascere, qui lucem surgis gens aurea mundo,
Tuque eadem magnus sacrorum conditor ordo;
Nascere, iam iamque magni procedere menses
Ne mihi nemo meos iuvenes rapiatque fruatur:
Prosperet ecce Deus miseris te nunc sede
Despiciens! Iam magnus alumni iam tempus honores;
Aspice ut omnis ovans tibi surgat machina belle,
Pandantque repert: pectora visendus orbem.

As a grotesque paraphrase of these lines one might well select the verses below from Pope's splendid eclogue:

From Jesse's root behold a branch arise
Whose sacred flower with fragrance fills the skies.
Th' ethereal spirit o'er its leaves shall move,
And on its top descend the mystic dove.
Ye heavens, from high the dewy nectar pour,
And in soft silence shed the kindly shower!
The sick and weak the healing plant shall aid,
From storms a shelter and from heat a shade.
All crimes shall cease and ancient fraud shall fail,
Returning justice lift aloft her scale:
Peace o'er the world her olive wand extend,
And white-robed Innocence from Heaven descend.
Swift fly the years and rise the expected morn!
O spring to light, auspicious Babe, be born.
See nature hastes her earliest wreaths to bring,
With all the incense of the breathing spring:
See lofty Lebanon his head advance,
See nodding forests on the mountains dance:
See spicy clouds from lowly Saron rise,
And Carmel's flowery top perfumes the skies!
Hark! a glad voice the lonely desert cheers;
Prepare the way! a God, a God appears.
A God, a God! the vocal hills reply,
The rocks proclaim the approaching Deity.
Lo, earth receives him from the bending skies!
Sink down, ye mountains, and ye valleys, rise;
With heads declined ye cedars, homage pay;
Be smooth, ye rocks; ye rapid floods, give way!
The Saviour comes! by ancient bards foretold:
Hear him, ye deaf, and all ye blind, behold!
He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eyeball pour the day:
'Tis he the obstructed paths of sound shall clear,
And bid new music charm the unfolding ear:
The dumb shall sing, the lame his crutch forego,
And leap exulting like the bounding roe.
No more shall nation against nation rise,
Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,
Nor fields with gleaming steel be covered o'er,
The brazen trumpets kindle rage no more:
But useless lances into scythes shall bend,
And the broad falchion in a ploughshare end.

These extracts serve to illustrate both the literary and religious tendencies which rendered this species of poetry popular. It maintained its hold in spite of the fact that Jerome condemned it severely as mere foolishness. The poems of Sedulius and Proba were read with so much reverence that they were formally relegated by Pope Gelasius to a place

among the apocryphal writings, lest they should become in the minds of the people associated with the productions of acknowledged fathers of the church.

VI

Not only in the centos, but otherwise, a general desire was shown, throughout the early part of the middle ages, to read and understand the Virgilian poems, and to put them to Christian use. Virgil was, above all, the one among the Gentiles to whom might be applied the words of the evangelist, "They heard that Jesus passed by." It seemed a thing worthy of compassion to see born in the time of the "false and lying gods" a great man whom his works and the traditions of his life presented as a soul candid and beautiful, and such an one as appeared eminently fitted to accept the words of Christ. Therefore, Dante, the faithful and profound interpreter of the religious sentiment of the middle ages, placed him, not among the damned, but in the place set apart for those whose sin had been only the involuntary one of being born before the Saviour. To others less thoughtful and less learned than Dante, Virgil seemed of almost equal dignity with the Hebrew prophets. What must be a surprising thing to those who minimize the classical knowledge of the middle ages is, that in a collection of tales so unstudied and so evidently popular as the *Gesta Romanorum*, there should be found a quotation from Virgil presented in a manner to show that it had grown trite from frequent repetition. The natural supposition would be that if any lines of Virgil were familiarly quoted by the preachers of those times, the selection would be from the fourth eclogue, and such was the case. The entire passage of

the English *Gesta* in which the translation occurs is worthy of being transcribed here. "As Pliny records," thus begins the story with a blunder at the outset, "there was a tree in India whose flowers had a sweet smell, and its fruit a delighful flavor. A serpent called Jacorbus, which dwelt near, had a great aversion to the odor, and that he might destroy its productiveness, envenomed the root of the tree. The gardener, observing what was done, took an antidote of that country and inserted it in a branch at the top of the tree, which presently drove the poison from the root. The tree, before barren, was now loaded with fruit." Then follows the application: "The tree is man, the fruit good works. The serpent is the devil, and the gardener is God. The branch is the blessed Virgin Mary. So Isaiah, 'A branch shall spring from the root of Jesse,' and thus, also, Virgil in the *second* of his bucolics:

> 'Jam redit et virgo redeunt saturnia regna:
> Jam nova progenies cælo dimittitur alto.
> Tu modo *nascendi* puero, quo ferrea primum,
> Desinet, *et* toto surget gens aurea mundo.'"

The error in attributing these verses to the second instead of the fourth eclogue, in the corrupt and ignorant use of *nascendi* for *nascenti*, and of *et* for *ac* in the last line, indicate that the writer was putting on paper what he had heard over and over again from the pulpit, and that because of his familiarity with the fragment, the possibility of a mistake did not even suggest itself to him. The insertion of the passage into the *Gesta* can not be accounted for upon any supposition except that the meaning affixed to the eclogue by the early Christians was transmitted from age to age by the preachers and homily writers. The ignorance of the class to whom these collections are attributed in the thirteenth century

was too dense and too pervasive to have admitted such a stroke of learning, save upon the delivery of tradition. Nor is there anything that should cause surprise in the hypothesis that a few lines of verse which appealed so strongly to the imagination of the religious should have been kept in mind for centuries. The memory was much better cultivated in those days than in our own. Obviously the appeal to books was incalculably less frequent then than now, and the anecdotes, illustrations and moral sayings which formed the most attractive elements of conversation and extempore discourses would long be thought unworthy of the pen.

VII

In the epoch when the legends of Virgilian magic were making, the notion that the sibyl prophesied of Christ easily became popular. This fancy, due in the first instance to the imagination of the apologists, diffused by the fathers, was in the twelfth century a current belief, not only with the clergy but with the laity. The name of the sibyl was frequent from that time in romantic literature and her figure was a favorite one with artists. The idea was sufficiently picturesque to be grasped by the rudest minds. It coincided with the most familiar doctrines of the church, and was elaborated by mediæval theologians as an incontestable proof of the divine origin of Christianity. The verse of the *Dies Iræ*,—*Teste David cum sibylla*, was a melodious expression of the universal opinion. The hold which such a belief would naturally have upon the minds of men was strengthened by the efforts of the preachers who found it admirably suited to popular sermons. But it was best of all adapted to the mysteries which, while

embraced in the liturgic ceremonies of the church, were intimately associated with other forms of vernacular poetry, and these were potent aids to the distribution of such an opinion. No personage, real or imaginary, connected with the narrative of the Gospels was a more plastic subject for the early dramatists than the sibyl. Mainly through these rude dialogues did she rise to the place where she is found in comparatively late literature, a place of so high regard that volumes have been wasted in grave discussion upon the question whether or not the prophecies attributed to her were genuine. It has been shown how the Virgil of tradition fell into relation with the sibyl. He became familiar to the popular mind in a prophetic aspect the more easily because of the growth of the legend which converted him into a magician. In the preaching adapted to the Nativity there was ample occasion to recall his name with that of the sibyl. In paintings his figure or one of his verses accompanied the representation of the sibyl. In the mysteries he was not infrequently one of the characters; as, for example, in the Latin drama which was presented in the Abbey of St. Martial at Limoges in the eleventh century, and that was wont to be acted at Rheims. After Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, David, Simeon, Elizabeth and John the Baptist, the precentor called Virgil, saying:

Vates Maro gentilium
Da Christo testimonium.

Virgil, in dress and aspect a mere youth, advanced to his place on the stage and exclaimed:

Ecce polo, demissa solo, nova progenies est,

an utterance so unmusical that it would have made the real Virgil gnash his teeth. Afterward Nebuchadnezzar and the

sibyl were each called, and then the precentor, turning to the Jews, cried out:

Judica incredula
Cur manes adhuc, inverecunda

A like office was performed by Virgil in the mystery of *The Foolish Virgins*, and in other mysteries written in German, Dutch and other languages. In a long dramatic composition of Arnoldo Immessen, in the fifteenth century, by a singular inversion of parts, the Cumæan sibyl cites Virgil as the authority from whom she drew her prophecy:

[*Sibylla Cumæ. Quæ fuit tempore Tarquinii Prisci:*]
Ik finde ok vandussen saken
Dat de meister Virgilius
Versch gemaket hebbe, de ludet alsus:
Magnus ab integro, etc.

In a mystery written in Latin in the eleventh century Virgil was represented as accompanying the three Wise Men from the East, who were guided by the Star to Bethlehem, and as joining with them in singing a long *Benedicamus*.

VIII

But Virgil does not always have a place in the mysteries. Sometimes the sibyl is the only representative of the pagan prophets. In one Latin mystery she is represented as presaging the coming of Christ by observing the star in the east. But Fra Diego de Valencia, the ancient Spanish poet writes that Virgil was the first who saw this star shining with its bright rays beyond the Grecian land. Gradually this ideal of Virgil as a prophet mingled

with the magical legend and thus we have at length in the mass of St. Paul, sung at Mantua in the fourteenth century, the verses:

Ad Maronis mausoleum
Ductis fudit super eum,
Piæ rorem lachrymæ;
Quem te, inquit, redidissem
Si te vivum invenissem
Poetarum maxime;

alluding to the narrative invented concerning St. Paul's visit to the sepulchre of Virgil, which was given at length in the French romance *L'Image du Monde*. According to this legend, the Apostle who was a man of much learning, when he went to Rome and heard that Virgil was but lately dead, was sorely grieved, especially because he had discovered in the works of the poet those verses which applied so well to the coming of the Saviour. He perceived that here had been a man disposed to welcome Christianity; and he deplored the fact that he could not preach Christ to one who would have been so eager to hear. He took so great an interest in the memory of Virgil that he went to his tomb. The journey thither was one of much toil and trouble. An impetuous wind blew and frightful thunders reverberated over the traveller's head. The Apostle could see Virgil sitting between two lighted tapers and surrounded on all sides by books, heaped promiscuously upon the floor of the cavern. From the vaulted roof of the sepulchre hung a lamp, and facing Virgil stood an archer in bronze with his bow drawn as if about to shoot. These things were to be seen from without but entrance was difficult. At the portal stood two bronze figures who kept up such a hammering with hammers of steel before the gate that it seemed impossible to pass by them. St. Paul quieted them

and went on seeking the book of necromancy, which the poet had written and taken to the tomb with him. But the bronze archer let fly his bolt extinguishing the lamp, and everything in the cavern was instantly turned to dust.

The author of *L'Image du Monde* manifestly owed his fancy concerning the book of necromancy attributed to Virgil, to the earlier narrative of the *Dolopathos*. In the verse of Herbers it is related that Virgil, though a wise man, could not escape death which comes with equal certainty to the fool and the sage. When he came to die he closed his hand so tightly upon his book of *nigromance* which he had written for his pupil Lucimien, that it was impossible to release the manuscript from his grasp and it was buried with him. The conclusion of the poem shows how early the supposed synchronism between the close of Virgil's life and the beginning of the Christian dispensation became the theme of romance. Scarcely were Dolopathos and Virgil dead and buried, the one at Palermo, the other at Mantua, when a preacher of the new religion appeared in Sicily. Herbers, as if to prevent any misconception of his chronology, declares that this man was one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. He expounded the new faith to the Sicilians, laying particular emphasis on the divinity of Jesus and the need of redemption on the part of mankind, because of Adam's transgression. While the missionary was discoursing to the crowd, one came to King Lucimien and informed him that strange doctrines were disseminating among the people. The king commanded that the preacher should be brought before him, and the latter spoke so wisely in his own defence, reciting the history of man's sin and redemption, and explaining the doctrines of Christianity, that at last Lucimien acknowledged himself a convert. Among the rest,

the preacher cited Virgil as having anticipated the advent of Christ and the beginning of a new race of heavenly origin:

Et Virgiles, ki vos aprist,
Or pansez a ceu ke il dist;
Assez en parlait propremant,
Et bien et bel et saigement;
Il dist ke novelle lignie
Estoit jai del' ciel envoie.

The last two verses of this passage are obviously a paraphrase of the line in the fourth eclogue:

Jam nova progenies cœlo dimittitur alto.

After being baptized, and seeing all his subjects devoted to the new faith, Lucimien resigned his kingdom and made a pilgrimage on foot to Jerusalem where he died.

IX

One of the legends told by the preacher in his sermon before Lucimien is that of the image of Romulus which was placed in the Temple of Piety and Concord. Romulus himself set it up saying that it should not fall until a virgin should bear a son. It was sometimes said that the temple which fell was sacred to Bacchus, and that its destruction was foretold not by a human builder or sovereign, but by an oracle which declared that it should stand *donec virgo peperit*. Hermannus Gigas collected all these legendary miracles into a single sentence, asserting that when Christ was born, a fountain of oil burst forth at Rome, the vines of Engaddi produced balsam; all sodomites, of whom Virgil was one, perished; the ox and the ass bent their knees in worship; the

idols of Egypt were broken to pieces; the image of Romulus tumbled down; the Temple of Peace was destroyed; three suns were seen which a little later became one; at noonday a golden circle appeared in the sky, within which Cæsar beheld a virgin with a child and heard a voice crying: *Hic est arcus cœli.*

This is of a piece with the miracle which, according to the mediæval legends, was witnessed by Augustus. The emperor called the sibyl to him one day and interrogated her upon the divine honors which had been decreed to him by the Senate. The sibyl, who is described in the *Dolopathos* as a *Sarrazine* responded that there would come from Heaven a king who would reign forever. Immediately the heavens opened and Augustus beheld a virgin of marvellous beauty seated upon an altar, with a babe in her arms, and heard a voice saying: "This is the altar of the Son of God." The emperor prostrated himself in homage and afterward narrated his vision in the Senate. On the spot where Augustus stood when the vision appeared to him, a church was erected, and to it was given the name of St. Mary on the Altar of Heaven. This legend was related by a Byzantine writer about the close of the eighth century, and was subsequently introduced into the Golden Legend, into the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Mirabilia Urbis Romæ.* The use of it by Herbers attests its popularity in the twelfth century. The theme inspired many of the church painters, and was frequently touched upon by writers of all degrees of merit. Even Petrarch alludes to it in one of his letters. The motive in the story was similar to that in the story of the statue set up by Romulus, which was cited as a miracle to prove the divine origin of Christianity, because when Christ was born the statue fell and was broken

to pieces. This story was soon woven into the fabric of Virgilian magic, as is shown in Neckam's account, and lost its early significance. The idle boast of Romulus became a fragment of Virgilian prophecy. The fancy was afterwards developed in a strange poem. It is in French, and appears to be really an awkward combination of two distinct poems, one of which might be called *The Romance of Vespasian*, the other the *Deeds of the Lotharingians* with a third narrating the acts of St. Severinus, connecting him genealogically on the one side with Vespasian and on the other with Hervis and Garin of Lorraine. The rhapsodist is not content merely to ally the family of a Roman emperor with that of certain mediæval heroes. In *The Romance of Vespasian*, having described the punishment of the Jews for the death of Christ, he conceived the idea of linking that event into the chain of Old Testament history. To accomplish this he invented a fantastic tale, in which Virgil was made the leading character. Instead of Augustus or Romulus, he had for emperor of Rome a nondescript personage whom he called Noirons li Arabis. Undoubtedly he meant Nero, who had become an extraordinary character in mediæval legend. Noirons was a worshipper of devils and of Mahons (Mohammed), and was, therefore, wholly a creation of the poet's fancy. In honor of his god, Mahons, he built a palace, all shining with gold and gems and taking Virgil to see it, said: "You, who know everything, tell me how long my palace will last." Virgil replied that it would stand until a virgin should bear a son. "Then it will stand forever," exclaimed Noirons, "for what you say can never be." "But one day it will be," answered Virgil; and thirty years afterward Christ was born and the palace tumbled down. Noirons in a great rage caused Virgil to be brought before

him, and demanded a full explanation of the prophecy which had been fulfilled. Virgil began to speak of the new faith, but the emperor refused to hear him.

Finally Noirons challenged Virgil to single combat in order to decide by wager of battle whose religion was the more powerful. The battle was to be to the death, for the conqueror was to cut off his opponent's head. Virgil agreed to this, but requested first that he might have time to return home and consult with his family and with Hippocrates, his master, and with other wise men. These came together at his bidding and he related all the circumstances of his quarrel with the emperor. Hippocrates resorted to his books, and there found the narrative of the events that foreshadowed the advent of Christ. He recited this in detail to Virgil. Armed with this knowledge, Virgil entered the lists confident of victory. On the other hand, Noirons, perceiving that the armor of his adversary was of ponderous and unwieldy make, felt sure of an easy triumph. He told the story of Lucifer and of the rebel angels who were changed into demons, and declared himself to be one of them. Virgil responded with an abstract of Biblical history, beginning with the creation. In this long debate, the romancer forgot all about the duel that was to be fought, and it is only in an additional scene where Noirons meets his master, Mahons, in hell that we learn how the battle ended. Bizarre and absurd as the poem is, it preserves the conception of Virgil as a prophet. In the contemporary German romances, Virgil lost that character altogether. It was merely by accident that he discovered the magical formula with which the inventor of astrology sought to prevent the coming of Christ. His own relation to the event seemed only the fortuitous one of being alive when it occurred.

Perhaps, the most satisfactory theory by which to account for these absurdities is to suppose that the popular mind, having been led gradually to accept as history the tales of Virgilian magic, and having learned from hymns and sermons the supposed relations of Virgil to the sibyl and to Christianity; conscious, moreover, in a vague way of his relations to the ancient world, but feeling a familiarity with his name as if it belonged to recent times—in seeking to picture him before the imagination could never develop a symmetrical character. A magician to satisfy the then common notion of such a being, must be entirely bad, cruel and malevolent. On the other hand, a prophet who had foretold the coming of Christ, and had accompanied his predictions with a joyous song of triumph, must have been one of the best of men. Then the mediæval imagination could not easily bridge the gulf between the antique and the modern. Virgil was looked upon as belonging both to the world that had passed away and to the one which still existed, and between those two worlds there was a period of indefinite length. A proper perspective could never be had of a figure that might be placed at any point in a series of centuries.

X

The work of Jean d'Outremeuse, which has already been alluded to, illustrated the final stage in the work of systematizing and harmonizing the conflicting legendary conceptions of Virgil. His *Ly Myreur des Histors* was a compilation from many authors of various epochs down to the close of the fourteenth century. Some of these writers the author named, the influence of others whom he has not named can be

discerned, particularly in that portion of his chronicle which related to ancient history. An enormous medley of legends and fantastic tales the author gathered, also, which can be traced to no definite source. The biography of Virgil alternates with other fictitious narratives in the semblance of some chronological order. So particular was d'Outremeuse in the matter of dates that when he had none at hand he invented such as suited him. In relating the wonders attributed to Virgil, he had in mind principally *L'Image du Monde*, though he used, in addition to that romance, other French and Latin writings in which the marvels sought by him were described. He aimed to collect all the legends, and often gave several different versions of the same story. Some of the tales which he related were apparently of his own invention. Others he elaborated from the simple outlines furnished by earlier writers. Throughout his work, however, he manifestly strove to draw a broad line of demarcation between the historical Virgil as presented in the biography attributed to Donatus and the prophet-magician whose adventures were most to his purpose. In a measure his work might be said to resemble the historical novel of recent times, in which the names of persons who once lived are linked to a series of incidents wholly fictitious. It is possible, however, that he may have looked upon the legendary Virgil as a real personage entirely separate from the Augustan poet. The exclusion of every incident bearing the stamp of history—in view of the fact that the work throughout evinces the acquaintance of the author with classical subjects—would seem to be the result of design. The idea of Virgil as a prophet of Christ became in his hands the most notable part of the legend. If this idea had not been a popular one, the work would have tended

to make it so. D'Outremeuse, with whom everything was fish that got into his net, used whatever seemed a plausible argument for uniting the magical and prophetic ideals in a consistent personality. Avoiding all reference to the sibyl and the fourth eclogue, he introduced Virgil preaching to the Romans and the Egyptians, thus converting him into a sort of heathen John the Baptist. He manufactured a sermon for Virgil in this novel character, which comprised all the particulars of the life and death of the Saviour, explained the unity of God, the doctrine of the Trinity and all the other articles of the creed. In the form of this discourse, the author had many exemplars; for instance, the sermon which the missionary preached in the *Dolopathos* was constructed upon similar outlines. Virgil's preaching converted to the new faith many who, the writer is careful to explain, were of the elect. But the mission to the Romans did not prevent the Virgil of d'Outremeuse from indulging in magical practices. He had legions of demons at his command. When the prophetic brazen head announced that his death was approaching, he remanded this horde of diabolical servitors to their infernal abode, solemnized his act of faith and completed a book upon Christian doctrine for the use of his converts. On the last day of his life he gave a dinner to a great concourse of guests upon whom he impressed anew the importance of his teachings. Then he clasped in his hands a book on theology, and placed himself on a low bench carved with representations of the events of the New Testament, where he remained seated, apparently asleep until the arrival of St. Paul. When the Apostle touched his cloak, his body crumbled to ashes. St. Paul grieved at first, believing that Virgil died a pagan, but was consoled by reading the book which the prophet had written.

XI

The attempt having been made in these pages to point out the traits of human nature which encouraged the growth of legends like those concerning Virgil, it will not be out of place to describe the character which was subsequently nourished upon them. In the fierce conflict of Papist and Protestant, there appeared a type of human being, relentless, unforgiving, implacable, rigid in morals, arrogant in dogmatic self-assertion, who dispensed with triumphant malice the sentences of eternal life and death, which only the Most High in any other age has dared to pronounce, and seconded, where he could, the sentence of everlasting perdition with immediate penalties in this present world. The factors which contributed to the formation of this species of human character were too many to be easily enumerated, but the eagerness with which it seized upon the superstitions respecting Virgil, and particularly those concerning the fourth eclogue, indicate clearly enough its tastes and some of its tendencies. A person of this sort is portrayed, not without some strokes of malice, in that gloomy and forbidding fiction, William Godwin's *Mandeville.* The reverend Hilkiah Bradford, in spite of his grave kindliness toward those whom he loved, was the embodiment of religious hatred. Just and upright and gentle as he was, only the opportunity was lacking to have made him a deadly persecutor of those who differed from him in points of doctrine. He regarded light laughter and merriment and the frolics of youth as indications of the sons of Belial and heirs of destruction. His figure was tall and emaciated, his complexion was of a yellowish brown, without the least tincture of vermillion, and was furrowed with the cares of study and the still more

earnest cares of devotion. His gait was saintly and solemn. He was familiarly conversant with the Greek and Latin languages, and with poetry; "Yet I must own," continues Godwin's bitter and cynical hero, "that he did not receive exactly the same sensations from Ovid and Virgil that I did. He had a clear apprehension of their grammatical construction; but he was not electrified, as I often was, with their beauties. The parts in which he most seemed to delight were those in which these poets bore the most resemblance to certain passages of sacred writ; so that, as Mr. Bradford persuaded himself to believe, they must have had some undiscovered access to the fountains of inspired wisdom. He found the Mosaic account of the creation in the commencement of the Metamorphoses, and the universal deluge in Deucalion's flood. But above all he was struck with the profoundest admiration in reading the Pollio of Virgil; he saw in it clearly a translation of the inspired raptures of the prophet Isaiah foretelling the coming of the Messiah, and he exclaimed, as he went on, with a delight, a thousand times repeated and never to be controlled: 'Almost thou persuadest me that thou art a Christian!'"

NINTH—VIRGIL IN LATER LITERATURE

I

From the foregoing pages it will have been inferred that the Virgilian legends, so far as they concerned the poet himself, had only a secondary connection with what is scientifically known as folk-lore. They were the product throughout of the literary spirit of times clouded by superstition. The popular element in them is the element which antedated their relation to Virgil. The opinion that they or any of them were first brought into relation with Virgil's name by the Neapolitan populace meets with an insuperable objection in the fact that Italian writers, both learned and popular, were far behind the writers of other nations in taking them up. Not only the Neapolitans, but all Italians felt a natural repugnance to connecting the name of the poet with diabolism or with magic. It was only after the early romancers of Northern and Western Europe had linked Virgil's name to a series of magical legends, and after men of learning like Neckam and Helinand, and Gervase and Conrad and Vincent of Beauveis had attached their names to them, that the Italian writers consented to accept them. Not

until near the close of the fourteenth century do we find them told as matter of history by a Neapolitan. The *Cronica di Partenope* was completed by Bartolomeo Caracciolo about the year 1382. It was ostensibly a compilation from a great number of earlier works, and in what was related of Virgil the author depended mainly upon the stories told by Gervase, and by one Alexander, whose identity is doubtful. Such incidents as he added to those told by Gervase might easily have been associated with the biography of Virgil after the magical legend received its form in the twelfth century. With Caracciolo, Virgil figured as a great benefactor of Naples, when counsellor and quasi director, or teacher of Marcellus, who, according to the mediæval historians, had been appointed Duke of Naples by Octavianus. It was Virgil who constructed the aqueducts and the fountains and excavated the wells and the sewers of the city. He devised games for the amusement of the populace. To the number of talismans attributed to Virgil, this chronicler added a cicada of brass, which destroyed the cicadas of the region about Naples; and a little fish in stone, deposited in a place known as the *Preta de lo Pesce*, which had the virtue of bringing good luck to the fishermen. The idea of diabolism was obnoxious to Caracciolo. He conceived the wonderful book found by Virgil to have been a scientific treatise and insisted that the grotto of Pozzuoli was opened by the aid of geometry. He was careful to add nothing of his his own invention and in concluding his account of the Virgilian legends he remarked: "I could of the said Virgil tell many other things which I have heard said of him; but for the reason that they appeared to be in great part mere fables, I did not wish to fill the minds of my readers with omens and dreams. Moreover, I have already set down many

things concerning Virgil out of authors whom I am less ready to trust as to those things than as to other matters which they have treated of. I beg the reader to pardon me for being reluctant to cloud the fame of so great a poet with any more such anecdotes, let them be true or false; and for being loth to do violence to my affection for our renowned city of Naples. The truth of these things God alone knows. I have said thus much in order that I may not present anything of which there is doubt, without warning those who shall read my book." There are fugitive allusions to the Virgilian legends in the poems of Roger of Apulia, Cino of Pistoia, and in Boccaccio's Commentary on Dante. Antonio Pucci left a memorandum of them in his desk which he may have intended to put to some use. He included the bronze fly, the bronze horse, the castle balanced on an egg, the garden surrounded by a wall of air, the inextinguishable candles and lamp, the prophetic head of bronze, and spoke of the regard felt for the relics of the poet. The fact that he placed the tomb of Virgil at Rome supports the opinion that he merely noted these anecdotes down in his reading, with the expectation of putting them to some use. He certainly knew better than to have made such a statement as a fact, even in the Florence of the fourteenth century. His notion of Virgil's power was that it was due to science, not magic, and a similar opinion was held by Gidino, a contemporary poet. In Mantua the writers who alluded to Virgil manifested first of all an acquaintance with Virgil's real character. Their fancies did not at the outset do violence to his fame as a poet, nor to his position as a man of learning. These writers did not forget that Virgil was born at Mantua. As may be inferred from some lines of Donizo certain places about the city were associated with his memory.

The city imprinted his image on its coins and erected a statue to his memory in the fourteenth century, but these tributes were the outcome of literary taste and culture. This fact is plainly revealed in the local chronicle which goes by the name of *Aliprandina*, because it was the work of Buonamente Aliprando, who wrote it about the year 1414. The absurdity of the composition and the fantastic things accumulated in it show that if Mantua had any local legends respecting Virgil, here was the very author to have gathered them up. Their absence from his work proves that they did not exist. He described Virgil as the glory of Mantua and wove a biography partly from Donatus and partly from the common stock of Virgilian legends. Beginning by an allusion to the father of Virgil and to the prophetic dream which Virgil's mother had previous to his birth, he described the personal appearance of the poet, his studies and his writings, mentioned the loss and subsequent recovery of his farm, and related how he was brought to the notice of Octavian by the lines beginning *Nocte pluit*. After bringing out the prophetic character of Virgil, he narrated the adventure of the basket and enumerated a few of the talismans attributed to him. His account of the death of Virgil is substantially that of Donatus with some additions respecting an imagined funeral, among the rest an oration by Octavian. Notwithstanding this oration and the character given to Virgil as a prophet, Aliprando, more corrupted by his Teutonic models than his Italian contemporaries, looked upon Virgil as a thorough magician, in the closest relations with Satan, and equipped with his indispensable book of necromancy. So, also, in some of the Latin biographies of the poet written toward the close of the middle ages, the figment of the magician and astrologer was taught as a matter

of fact. But as late as the sixteenth century a case occurred that showed how little to the taste of the Italian public the stories of Virgilian magic truly were. The anonymous author of the *History of Prince Erastus*, a version of *The Seven Wise Masters*, when he came to the story which is usually told of Virgil, substituted another personage and changed the name of Rome to that of an imaginary city.

II

With the leaders of the Latin revival in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Virgil was restored to the place in which Macrobius had left him. While he was honored with praise beyond his merit as a poet, the legendary characteristics that had been attributed to him were steadily ignored. The flower of that period was the passage in the Poetics of Vida, which was worthy even of the Augustan age. Vida wrote:

> Virgilii ante omnes læti hic super astra feremus
> Carminibus patriis laudes; decus unde Latinum,
> Unde mihi vires, animus mihi ducitur unde.
> Primus ut Aoniis musas deduxerit oris,
> Argolicum resonans Romana per oppida carmen;
> Ut juvenis Siculas silvis inflarit avenas;
> Utque idem Ausonios animi miseratus agrestes,
> Extulerit sacros ruris super æthera honores,
> Triptolemi invectus volucri per sidera curru:
> Res demum ingressus Romanæ laudis ad arma
> Excierit Latium omne, Phrygumque instruxerit alas,
> Verba deo similis. Decus a te principe nostrum
> Omne, pater! tibi Grajugenum de gente trophæa
> Suspendunt Itali vates, tua signa sequuti.
> Omnis in Elysiis unum te Græcia campis
> Miraturque, auditque ultro, assurgitque canenti.

Te sine nil nobis pulchrum: omnes ora Latini
In te, oculosque ferunt versi; tua maxima virtus
Omnibus auxilio est; tua libant carmina passim
Assidui, primis et te venerantur ab annis.
Ne tibi quis vatum certaverit; omnia cedant
Sæcla, nec invideant primos tibi laudis honores.
Fortunate operum! tua præstans gloria famæ,
Quo quenquam aspirare nefas, sese extulit alis.
Nil adeo mortale sonas; tibi captus amore
Ipse suos animos, sua munera lætus Apollo
Addidit, ac multa præstantem insigniit arte
Quodcunque hoc opis, atque artis, nostrique reperti,
Uni grata tibi debet præclara juventus,
Quam docui, et rupis sacræ super ardua duxi,
Dum tua fida lego vestigia, te sequor unum,
O Decus Italiæ! lux o clarissima vatum!
Te colimus, tibi serta damus, tibi thura, tibi aras
Et tibi rite sacrum semper dicemus honorem,
Carminibus memores; salve, sanctissime vates!
Laudibus augeri tua gloria nil potis ultra;
Et nostræ nil vocis eget; nos aspice præsens,
Pectoribusque tuos castis infunde calores
Adveniens pater! atque animis tete insere nostris.

III

The only example in modern times which would indicate that these legends, as connected with the name of Virgil, had a root in the folk-lore of Naples, is an anecdote related by Von der Hagen in *Briefe in die Heimath.* The German investigator, who was undoubtedly seeking for something that would support his own theories, found an old fisherman who pointed out to him the place where Virgil often sat book in hand. Virgil was a handsome man, with a ruddy face. By his arts

he had learned how to preserve his youth. Upon all the walls near by circles and lines were drawn by means of which Virgil taught Marcellus the secrets of the world of spirits. Often in the most violent tempests, when none of the fishermen dared expose themselves to the fury of the storm, Virgil would be seen putting to sea in an open boat. No sailor feared disaster if Virgil were on board of the vessel. Sometimes he ascended to the most exposed part of the ship and sitting there wrote in his books undisturbed by the wind and the waves. He was a prophet, for there never came a storm which he did not predict. He visited the gardeners and farmers, also, and gave them much useful advice, explaining to them under what signs it was best to plant their seeds. With a potent word he was wont to allay the tempest when it pleased him; and when Vesuvius threatened an eruption he would stand up for whole nights with his eye fixed on the mountain, probably holding converse with familiar spirits. He entertained for a long time the idea of making a road from Naples to Posilippo. Finally his spirits completed the work in one night, excavating the tunnel through the mountains which is still to be seen. At another time he benefited the Neapolitans in a wonderful way. The gnats being as numerous as they were in Egypt at the time of Moses, Virgil made a fly of gold which, at his command, rose in the air and scattered these noxious pests. Again, all the springs and fountains of the kingdom became infested with leeches. Virgil dispelled this plague by making a golden leech, which he placed in one of the fountains.

Without taking up the question how far the German author may have been the victim of misplaced confidence, it is sufficient to observe that after so long a career in literature it would be strange if these legends had not left some

reminiscence in the minds even of some unlettered persons. If that reminiscence had been general, why should it have vanished with Von der Hagen? Yet there is not a trace of them at the present day in Naples, as Professor Comparetti himself says. In the neighborhood of the grotto of Pozzuoli, a peasant described the house which Virgil built upon the mountain, and another, pointing to an aperture in the sides of the grotto, said it was the window where Virgil talked with his sweetheart. But the most important relic of the magical reputation of the poet is the little song which was heard from the lips of a countryman in a fishing village near Lecce, in which a lover is represented as saying: "If I were a magician like Virgil, I would bring the sea to your door. I would then become a little fish that I might be caught in your net."

IV

Such being the position of Italy with reference to the legendary reputation of Virgil, nothing is left except to say that the legends owed their genesis and development to the romancers of France and Germany—a fact which the reader has already discovered, perhaps, for himself. When it is remembered that the three most notable writers who discussed the legends from the vantage of learning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were Englishmen—namely, John of Salisbury, Neckam and Gervase—the subsequent treatment of the tales by the poets of England was remarkable. Chaucer put an allusion to the *Salvatio Romæ* into the mouths of the populace in the tale of Cambuscan, as if to show that he thought it a mere gossiping invention. His familiarity with Italian

literature may have led him to discredit it. On the other hand, Gower, essentially an imitator of the French versifiers, taking the story as told in the romance of the *Seven Wise Masters*, interspersed it with some philosophy of his own, but related it with such care as to enforce the belief that he credited it. The mirror, according to his narrative, was of such power that it disclosed the numbers of the enemy and all his ordnance of war at a distance of thirty miles. Its destruction was plotted by the prince of Carthage and the king of Apulia. How innocent of doubt Gower was in this case is shown by the fact that he connected the story with historic incidents of Hannibal's campaigns, for he not only made him the leader of the Carthaginians, but added:

> And thus hath Rome lost his pride
> And was defouled over all.
> For this I pride of Hannibal,
> That he of Romains in a day,
> When he hem found out of array,
> So great a multitude slough,
> That of gold rings which he drough,
> Of gentil hondes that ben ded,
> Bushelles fulle there I rede
> He filled and made a brigge also
> That he might over Tyber go
> Upon the corpses that dede were
> Of the Romans which he slough there.

Lydgate discarded the mirror which the French romancers made so much of, and returned to the antique story substantially as it had been related by Neckam. In his *Bochas* speaking of the Roman Pantheon, he wrote:

> Whyche was a temple of old foundacion,
> Ful of ydols, up set on hye stages;
> There through the worlde of every nacion

Were of theyre goddes set up great ymages,
To every kingdom direct were theyr visages
As poetes and Fulgens by hys live
In bokes olde plainly doth dyscrive.

Every ymage had in his hande a bell,
As appertaineth to every nacion
Which by craft some token should tell
When any kingdom fill in rebellion.

Both of these poets avoided the notions of magic pertaining to their time. Gower attributed Virgil's achievement solely to his learning, while Lydgate suggests that the movements of the images were due to the craft, that is, the mechanical skill of the inventor. The notion of diabolism so popular with the Germans was altogether ignored.

In a work like the *Confessio Amantis* it might be supposed that Gower would have found occasion to relate the adventure of the basket at length, but it was, perhaps, too gross to please him. At all events he merely alluded to it in the description given by the Confessor of his vision of lovers:

And eke Virgile of acquientance
I sigh, where he the maiden praid,
Which was the doughter as men sayd
Of th' emperour whilom of Rome.

It remained for Stephen Hawes in his *Pastime of Pleasure* to enlarge upon the tale. Nevertheless he showed that he looked upon it as a fiction by putting it in the mouth of one False Reporte who had changed his name to the less troublesome one of Godfrey Gobelyve. The amiable Godfrey held forth at great length upon the cunning of the sex, and after telling the story of Aristotle, who was persuaded by a woman to act the part of a horse while she bridled and rode him, fell upon Virgil in a scandalous wise. There is something diverting in

the specific character of the information vouchsafed by the poet. It was just eleven of the clock when Virgil put himself in the basket. The lady and her maids drew him up five fathoms from the ground. He hung there until high noon of the next day. When he revenged himself by extinguishing the fires, it was not the city merely that suffered, but for

> —— A great circute aboute,
> There was no fyre that was un-put-out.

V

Not only were the legends discredited, but there appears to have been a time when—the old romances and works like those of Neckam having ceased to be read—they were completely forgotten. Just after the Reformation, when the universities were full of the spirit of independence, the satirical poems of the twelfth century—some of which are supposed to be the composition of Walter Mapes—were recovered from the dust of the libraries in which they had lain so long. It was natural that a poem, for example, like the *Apocalypsis Goliæ Episcopi*, so suitable to the temper of the times, should be translated. It is a curious fact that in a translation otherwise accurate any person with a knowledge of Latin or of the tradition, should have understood the stanza:

> Lucanum video ducem bellantium;
> *Formantem æreas muscas Virgilium;*
> Pascentem fabulis turbas Ovidium,
> Nudantem satyros dicaces Persium;

in this way:

> There saw I Lucane eke, of warlike writers chiefe
> *And Virgil then did shape the small bees of the aire,*
> And Ovid with his tales to many was reliefe,
> Perseus his taunts and satyres did not spare.

It is possible that the translator in this case took the Latin to be merely an allusion to the verses of Virgil respecting bees. At a somewhat later time the true rendering was given by another translator in the line:

Virgil meanwhile is framing flies of brasse.

We can only suppose that the earlier translator, having no knowledge of the legends, concluded that *æreas* was an error of the copyist and so substituted for it the word most similar to it in appearance. So in the English metrical version of *The Seven Wise Men*, the name of Virgil was omitted altogether, and the name of Merlin put in its place, although in other particulars the version was not unlike those from which it was made. The beginning of the episode of the magic mirror will substantiate the truth of this remark:

The emperes hire tale bygane,
And sayde, "Sire hit was a mane,
Merlyn he hatte, and was a clerke,
And bygan a wonder werke;
He made in Rome thourow clergyse
A piler that stode fol heyghe,
Heyer wel than ony tour,
And ther-oppon a myrrour,
That schon over al the town by nyght
As hyt were day light,
That the wayetys myght see;
Yf any man came to cite
Any harm for to doon,
The cite was warnyd soone."

Marlowe, in his tragedy of *Doctor Faustus*, puts into that magician's mouth the words:

There saw we learned Maro's golden tombe,
The way he cut an English mile in length
Thorough a rock of stone in one night's space.

But he needed to know little of the legends to have discovered this, inasmuch as it was one of the particulars mentioned in the tales of Faust from which he drew the materials of his story. He might have known much more of the legends of Virgil if he had chosen to do so, for at the beginning of the sixteenth century they had been systematized by the unknown author of *Les Faictz merveilleux de Virgille*, and this little book was early translated into Icelandic, German, Dutch and English. With these fanciful and absurd fictions the productive period of the Virgilian Legends may be said to have ended. The process of elaboration which had been carried on at intervals for several centuries is characterized by one notable fact. While the scene of the legends was of necessity in Italy, at Naples first, and then at Rome and even at Venice, the magician was invested by each race with its own eccentricities. The Italians alone could be said to have preserved an adequate notion of him as a poet. The northern races made him the companion and the victim of devils. The French elaborated the notion of him as a dissolute lover, while the Spanish, least amenable to the influence of other nations, converted him into a silly, over-amorous hidalgo.

VI

These false ideals were not easily corrected even by the rapid progress of learning in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The passage already quoted from Vida gives an expression of the almost idolatrous homage paid to Virgil by the scholars of the renaissance. The studied ease and perfection of his style, his lofty moral and political purpose, his supposed relation to Christianity, his superhuman achievements in arts foreign to poetry, were all adapted to the minds of men with whom the power of criticism was, so to speak, a rediscovered faculty. The fanciful tales of necromancy and the elaborate allegories that had been invented to explain the Æneid did not seem incredible to the evangelists of a newly-vitalized scholarship. It did not occur to them as absurd that Fulgentius should have found the whole philosophy of human life wrapped up in the line:

Arma, virumque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris,

that he should have classified life in three gradations; nor that Bernard of Chartres should have seen in Virgil a philosopher who described the nature of human life; nor that John of Salisbury should have found in the story of the Æneid the arcana of all wisdom. Scaliger and others as great and learned as he, blinded by the reverential spirit, the tendency of ages of tradition, rated the genius of Virgil above that of Homer. But in the chaos of literature which the art of printing caused, such partial worship of a single great name could not continue. The readers of Virgil gradually separated, according to their prejudices, into a few great classes, the smallest number accepting Scaliger's narrow definition of a poet. Some, out of an excessive and superstitious

regard for antiquity, endeavored to strengthen the fabric of mediæval legend, and to revive the notions of the fifth century by means of centos in the manner of Proba and Sedulius. Some attributed unimaginable virtues to a single verse; for example, the Jesuit Caspar Knittelius, taking the seven words of the first line in the anonymous proem to the Æneid:

Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena,

found in them an equal number of arguments in defence of the virtue of humanity. Others renewed the post-classical superstition respecting Virgilian divination as in the well-known anecdote of Charles I. and the poet Cowley. Opposed to these worshippers of the antique were men of more modern spirit who denounced or ridiculed the fables of mediæval times. As on the one hand, Trithemius, Paracelsus, Vigenere, Le Loyer, in works on the occult sciences, deemed it necessary to perpetuate the Virgilian legends, so on the other hand, men like Gabriel Naude and Bayle labored with well-directed energy to destroy beliefs that lay at the foundation of the cruel laws relating to magic and witchcraft. Naude's *Apologie pour Personnages faussement soupçonnés de Magie* is a monument of erudition and sound judgment. It might seem to us that he was contending against an imaginary enemy, if we were not informed that such vexatious puerilities as an alphabet for secret writing, tables of nativities, and magic images were attributed to Virgil by men who, aside from this demonomania which possessed them, showed themselves well nurtured in good learning. At a comparatively late date mirrors were exhibited in Paris and Florence, which were confidently asserted to be the very instruments endued with magical properties by Virgil. A conclusive argument with those who

were yet in the darkness of mediævalism was that a scholar, a chancellor and a churchman like Gervase could not have been deceived in these matters. Naude boldly took issue with them at this point. He wrote that he could hardly believe a man to be in his senses who gave the sanction of his name to such tales as Gervase related. The general popularity of Bayle's Dictionary helped to complete the work of demolition which Naude began. Sharp controversy followed, in the nature of things, upon the merits of Virgil as a poet. There were those who, like Mambrun, denied to him the possession of genius. The famous author of the epic *Constantinus* was so bitterly partisan in his opposition to Virgil that he enumerated those things which have always been thought meritorious in Virgil as so many arguments against him. He condemned the Æneid as a poem with an excellent subject ill-treated, and criticised it in detail with a violence that verged on brutality. The incidents of the combat between Turnus and Æneas were objected to as lacking heroic purpose and validity of good reason. The death of the former, Mambrun declared, was not due to the valor of his opponent, but to a single word of Jove, who was introduced, contrary to the precept of Aristotle, to do what should have been expected of a human hero. The story of Sinon should never have had a place in epic poetry, for deceit is immoral, and it is the office of heroic verse to teach morality. The conduct of Ulysses and Diomedes was devoid of rectitude and unworthy of heroes, and should have received different treatment. How would it look for a Christian to celebrate in grandiloquent verse the taking of Jerusalem by the Sultan? Even the propriety of such a poem from the pen of a Mohammedan might be doubted. Turning to matters of grammar, Mambrun pointed out places in Virgil

where the diction was as loose and undignified as prose, places where the ancient author had been guilty of rhyme, and places where there was a needless grouping or iteration of harsh syllables. He would as lieve hear a dog bark as listen to such a line as this:

Puniceis invecta rotis aurora rubebit.

Fortunately the *Constantinus* remains. In that production, Mambrun demonstrated anew the familiar truth that, though a cat may look at a king, it cannot wield the sceptre. In a later generation, John Pinkerton, an Englishman, under the pseudonym of *Heron*, in *Letters on Literature* attacked the memory of Virgil with some skill, but with needless acrimony. The gentle Cowper, whose piety did not affect his love of the great pagan poets, responded with an angry epigram, in which he promised the offender,

A perpetuity of fame,
That rots and stinks, and is abhorr'd.

Among men of the present century, the most distinguished depreciator of Virgil was Coleridge, who maintained that little would be left to the author of the Æneid if his diction and metre were taken away. This is a criticism that would apply as well to *The Ancient Mariner* as to any Maronic work, and is probably only one example of that subtle perversity which Coleridge sometimes displayed.

VII

At a later day Bishop Warburton—that eminent master of paradoxes—whose tendency in criticism was to what might now be described as the sensational, attempted to prove that the description of Æneas's descent into Hades was an

allegorical exposition of the ancient mysteries. This rhapsody had the merit of eliciting from an anonymous author the sensible pamphlet, "Critical observations on the Sixth Book of the Æneid," one of the earliest utterances of the calm and rational spirit of modern scholarship which seeks to interpret Virgil's writings by the cold clear light of historical and philological learning; a scholarship which has guided the pens of the great commentators, inspired and corrected the poetical translators, and illumined the obscure pages of mediæval study.

Warburton was not the first Englishman with a taste for eccentric theories as to Virgil's meaning. John Beaumont, gentleman, early in the eighteenth century had printed in London a remarkable treatise of his own upon the gentile oracles. The treatise was not more remarkable than the man. He was a spiritualist of the extreme sort long before the doctrines of modern spiritualism had been thought of, and his views on all the subjects he discussed were colored by a tendency to vision and allegory. It was not unnatural then that, rejecting all commonly accepted notions about the fourth eclogue of Virgil, he should have conceived it to be a pagan expression of the Christian dogma of regeneration. He supposed all the works of the poet to have been written with an eye to religion and church dispensations. After having spent no small time in considering the writings of the gentiles, he could not make tolerable sense of many passages in them except by means of Christian doctrines relating to the inner life. This was especially true in all the works of Virgil, but the same was true in a less degree of other authors. While there were great obstacles in the way of applying the fourth eclogue to Christ, to the son of Pollio, or to any historical personage, there was none in the way of referring it to the inward birth: "And

here I must aver," he remarks, "that those who have experimentally observed the work of regeneration and inward birth to have passed in them, if they are also learned, will be able to clearly verify within themselves all that the poet has set forth relating to the birth he celebrates." Then he goes on to assert that the Eleusinian mysteries looked to this same doctrine, thus putting vaguely in a sentence the germ of a theory not altogether unlike that which Warburton developed afterward. For Warburton was also seeking to establish a peculiar hypothesis respecting a phase of Christian opinion by appealing to the authors of ancient paganism. His exposition of the Æneid forms part of the second book of *The Divine Legation of Moses*. Presuming that the descent of Æneas into Hades is only a figurative description of an initiation and particularly an exact picture of the spectacles in the Eleusinian mysteries, he begins his argument by saying that Virgil found the domain of morals taken up by Homer, who also compassed the realm of physical inquiry, inasmuch as those who had allegorized his poems had "opened a back door to let in the philosopher with the poet." Virgil, therefore, taking the other great field of ancient thought and activity, sought to make his epic a system of politics. The Æneid, written on this plan, is as complete an institute in verse by example as the Republics of Plato and Cicero are by precept in prose. "Everything in the book," says Warburton, "points to great and public ends. The turning of the ships into sea deities, in the ninth book, has the appearance of something infinitely extravagant. The philosophic commentators of Homer's poem had brought the fantastic refinement of allegory into great vogue. We may estimate the capacity of Virgil's judgment in not catching at so alluring a bait that some of the greatest of the modern

epic poets, who approached nearest to Virgil in genius, have been betrayed by it. Yet, here and there our poet, to convey a political precept, has employed an ingenious allegory. And the adventure in question is, I think, of this number. By the transformation of the ships into sea deities, he would insinuate, I suppose, the great advantage of cultivating a naval power; such as extended commerce and the dominion of the ocean. He explained the allegory more clearly in the following book, where he makes these transformed sea-nymphs accompany Æneas and his fleet of auxiliaries through the Tyrrhene sea. This ministerial hint was the more important and seasonable, as all of Octavian's traverses, in his way to empire, were from his want of a sufficient naval power. Nor was it at this time less flattering to Augustus, to whom the Alexandrians erected a magnificent temple, porticoes and sacred groves, where he was worshipped under the title of Cæsar, the protector and patron of sailors. So he became a sea god at the head of these goddesses." This fanciful interpretation of Virgil's high-flown imagery does not comport very well with his known dislike of commerce and the sea, but it illustrates the method by which the Bishop of Gloucester went about the task of finding in the poet a meaning which nobody else had discovered. The key to the Æneid which he devised cleared up in his opinion not only many passages which had been troublesome to the critics, but added infinite beauty to a great number of incidents throughout the poem. "Virgil was so learned," continued Warburton, "in all that concerned the Roman ritual, that it was a common saying (as we collect from Macrobius) *Virgilius noster pontifex maximus videtur.* It being now understood that the Æneid is in the style of ancient legislation, it would be hard to think that so great a master in

his art should overlook a doctrine which, we have shown, was the foundation and support of ancient politics—namely, a future state of rewards and punishments. Accordingly, he has given us a complete system of it in imitation of his models, which were Plato's Vision of Erus and Tully's Dream of Scipio. And as the lawgiver took care to support this doctrine by a very extraordinary institution and to commemorate it by a rite, which has all the allurement of a spectacle; and afforded matter for the utmost embellishments of poetry, we can not but confess a description of such a scene would add largely to the grace and elegance of his work, and must conclude he would be invited to attempt it. Accordingly, we say, he has done this likewise in the allegorical descent of Æneas into hell; which is no other than an enigmatical representation of his initiation into the mysteries. Virgil was to represent an heroic lawgiver in the person of Æneas; now, initiation into the mysteries was what sanctified his character and ennobled his function. Hence we find all the ancient heroes and lawgivers were, in fact, initiated. And it was no wonder the legislator should endeavor by his example to give credit to an institution of his own creating. Another reason for the hero's initiation was the important instruction the founders of empire received in matters that concerned their office. A third reason for his initiation was their custom of seeking support and inspiration from the god who presided in the mysteries. A fourth reason for his initiation was the circumstance in which the poet has placed him, unsettled in his affairs and anxious about his future fortune. Now, amongst the uses of initiation, the advice and direction of the oracle was not the least; and an oracular bureau was so necessary an appendix to some of the mysteries, as particularly

the Samothracian, that Plutarch, speaking of Lysander's initiation, there expressed it by a word that signifies consulting an oracle. On this account, Jason, Orpheus, Hercules, Castor and (as Macrobius says) Tarquinius Priscus, were every one of them initiated into the mysteries. A fifth reason was the conforming of the old popular tradition, which said that several other heroes of the Trojan times, such as Agamemnon and Ulysses, had been initiated. A sixth and principal reason was that Augustus, who was shadowed in the person of Æneas, had been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. While the mysteries were confined to Egypt, their native country, and while the Grecian lawgivers went thither to be initiated, as a kind of a designation to their office, the ceremony would be naturally described in terms highly allegorical. This was in part owing to the genius of Egyptian manners; and in part the humor of travellers, but most of all to the policy of the lawgivers, who, returning home to civilize a barbarous people, by laws and arts, found it useful and necessary (in order to support their own characters and to establish the fundamental principle of a future state) to represent that initiation in which was seen the condition of departed mortals in machinery, as an actual descent into hell. This way of speaking was used by Orpheus, Bacchus and others and continued even after the mysteries were introduced into Greece, as appears by the fables of Hercules, Castor, Pollux and Theseus's descent into Hell. But the allegory was generally so circumstanced as to discover the truth concealed under it. Both Euripides in the *Hercules furens* and Aristophanes in his *Frogs* seem to confirm our interpretation of these descents into hell. Thus we see Virgil was obliged to have his hero initiated; and he actually had the authority of antiquity to call this initiation a

descent into hell. Hence some of the pretended Orphic odes, sung at the celebration of the mysteries, bore this title. And surely he made use of his advantages with great judgment; for such a fiction animates the relation, which, delivered out of allegory, had been too cold and insipid for epic poetry. We see from Æneas's urging the examples of those heroes and lawgivers who had been initiated before him that his request was only for an initiation. It is to be observed that Theseus is the only one of these ancient heroes not recorded in history to have been initiated, though we have shown that his descent into hell was, like that of the rest, only a view of the mysteries. The reason is, his entrance was a violent intrusion. Had an old poem, under the name of Orpheus, entitled a descent into hell, been now extant, it would probably have shown us that no more was meant than Orpheus's initiation; and that the idea of the sixth book was taken from thence. But, further, it was customary for the poets of the Augustan age to exercise themselves on the subject of the mysteries, as appears from Cicero, who desires Atticus, then at Athens, and initiated, to send to Chilius, a poet of eminence, an account of the Eleusinian mysteries; in order, it would seem, to insert it into some poem he was then writing. Thus it appears that both the ancient and contemporary poets afforded Virgil a pattern for this famous episode. Even Servius saw thus far into Virgil's design as to say that many things were here delivered according to the profound learning of the Egyptian theology. And we have shown that the doctrines taught in the mysteries were invented by that people. But though I say this was our poet's general design, I would not be supposed to mean that he followed no other guides in the particular circumstances of it. Several of them are borrowed from Homer; and several

of them from the philosophic notions of Plato. The great agent in this affair is the sibyl; and as a virgin she sustains two principal and distinct parts—that of the inspired priestess to pronounce the oracle, and that of the hierophant to conduct the initiated through the whole celebration. Hence Virgil calls the sibyl *Magna sacerdos* and *docta comes*, words of equivalent significance, and this because the mysteries of Ceres were always celebrated in Rome by female priests, and as the female mystagogue, as well as the male, was devoted to a single life, so was the Cumæan sibyl, whom he calls *casta sibylla*. Another reason why a priestess is given to conduct him is because Proserpine presided in this whole affair. And the name of the priestess in the Eleusinian mysteries shows that she properly belonged to Proserpine, though she was also called the priestess of Ceres. Under the branch is figured the wreath of myrtle with which the initiated were crowned at the celebration of the mysteries. The doves of Venus direct Æneas to the tree for the myrtle, as is known to every one, was consecrated to Venus. It was gold, because a golden bough was literally part of the sacred equipage in the shows. The sibyl, on their approach to the mouth of the cave, had advised Æneas to summon up all his courage, as being to undergo the severest trial. These trials were of two sorts: the encountering real labors and difficulties, and the being exposed to imaginary and false terrors. This latter was objected to all the initiated in general; the other was reserved for the chiefs and leaders. On which account, Virgil described them both in their order; as they were both to be undergone by his hero. On coming to the banks of Cocytus, Æneas is surprised at the crowd of ghosts which hover round it and appear impatient for a passage. His guide tells him they are

those who have not had the rites of sepulture performed to their manes, and so are doomed to wander up and down for a hundred years before they are permitted to cross the river. We are not to think this old notion took its rise from the vulgar superstition. It was one of the wisest contrivances of ancient politics; and came originally from Egypt, the fountain head of legislation. Those profound masters of wisdom, in projecting for the common good, found nothing would more contribute to the safety of their fellow-citizens than the public and solemn interment of the dead, as, without this provision, private murders might be easily and securely committed. They, therefore, introduced the custom of pompous funeral rites. The Egyptian sages found afterward another use in this opinion; and by artfully turning it to a punishment on insolvent debtors, strengthened public credit to the great advantage of commerce and consequently of civil community. Virgil divided the world of the dead into three parts; purgatory, tartarus, elysium; and so did the mysteries. And here it is to our purpose to observe that the virtues and vices which stock these three divisions with inhabitants are such as more immediately affect society; a plain proof that the poet followed the views of the legislator, the institutor of the mysteries. It is remarkable that Æneas is led through the regions of purgatory and elysium; but he only sees the sights of tartarus at a distance, and this could not well be otherwise in the shows of the mysteries for very obvious reasons. Advancing to the borders of elysium, the hero undergoes the lustrations which, as Sopater says, immediately precede initiation into the greater mysteries. The amusements of the blessed suggest the games which were celebrated with the Eleusinian mysteries. Virgil has all along closely followed the doctrine of the mysteries

which carefully taught that virtue only could entitle men to happiness, and that rites, ceremonies, lustrations and sacrifices would not supply the want of it. Nor has he been less studious in copying their shows and representations, in which the figures of those heroes and heroines who were most celebrated in the writings of the ancient Greeks passed in procession. But, notwithstanding this entire conformity between the poet's scenes and those represented in the mysteries, something is still wanting to complete the proofs, and that is, the famous secret of the mysteries, the unity of the godhead. Musæus, therefore, who had been hierophant at Athens, takes the place of the sibyl and is made to conduct him to the recess where his father's shade opens to him the doctrine of truth. This was no other than the doctrine of the old Egyptians, as we are assured by Plato, who says they taught that Jupiter was the spirit which pervaded all things. Finally, the gates of dreams represent the reality of the future state and the false show of it in the mysteries."

VIII

While these sentences have been placed within quotation marks, it must be stated that they are not a literal transcript of a passage from Warburton's voluminous criticism which covers, including copious extracts from the poet, ninety large pages of print. The only way to give an adequate view of a rhapsody, which, late as it was in point of time, was far more closely related to mediæval than to modern methods of interpreting Virgil, seemed to be that of linking together those passages which carried the argument along from the beginning to the end without a lapse that would be unjust to Warburton's

acknowleged power and acuteness. This has been done with as little modification of phraseology as seemed possible. It will be unnecessary to point out to any one acquainted with the sixth book of the Æneid how narrow the grounds are for this towering fabric of presumption. The principal point is that the allegory is needless. Nothing is added to the value or interest of Virgil's work by supposing that he drew his inspiration from the mysteries rather than from the universal beliefs of the ancient world respecting the state of the dead. The theory of Warburton has too little of what Virgil wrote and too much totally extraneous suggestion and inference to inspire any confidence. The conclusion that because Cicero on behalf of a poetical friend asked Atticus to give some account of the mysteries—presumably of the public pageant—therefore it was the fashion for the poets of that day to write about the mysteries, is a specimen of the non-sequitur by which the Bishop of Gloucester attempted to sustain his case. But his style was so vigorous, his method so plausible and interesting that it was long before any writer was found with courage and ability sufficient to defend the honor of the poet—for to have exposed the secret of the mysteries was disgraceful — and the genuineness of the theme which he aimed to illustrate. The elaborate hypothesis was received with zealous praise by some, with studied silence by others, and by a few with such indignant outbursts as that of the poet Hayley:

> When grave Bossu by system's studied laws
> The Grecian bard's ideal picture draws,
> And wisely tells us that his song arose
> As the good parson's quiet sermon grows;
> Who, while his easy thoughts no pressure find
> From hosts of images that crowd the mind,
> First calmly settles on some moral text,

Then creeps from one division to the next!
Nor, if poetic minds more slowly drudge
Thro' the cold comments of this Gallic judge,
Will their indignant spirit less deride
That subtle pedant's more presumptive pride,
Whose bloated page with arrogance replete,
Imputes to Virgil his own dark conceit:
And from the tortured poet dares to draw
That latent sense which Horace never saw;
Which, if on solid proof more strongly built,
Must brand the injured bard with impious guilt.

The hypothesis was finally analyzed, as has been stated, by an anonymous writer in 1770. The book has been out of print for nearly a century. It was, in fact, no longer to be purchased when Hayley published the above lines in 1782. The author attacked with effective sarcasm the notion which Warburton had elaborated, that the Æneid was constructed on the lines of a political treatise. He then appealed to the text of the poet as showing the impossibility of Warburton's hypothesis respecting the mysteries. There are two arguments which, in his opinion, render it incredible that Virgil could have depicted scenes from a temple of Ceres under the guise of a real descent into Hades. The first is Virgil's ignorance and the second his discretion. The historical probability is so great as to amount almost to a certainty that Virgil never was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries. But suppose that he had been initiated, is it not unlikely that a man so devout and so learned in matters of religion would have violated the common sense and outraged the universal feelings of the Roman and Grecian world by exposing what had so long been considered inviolable? If he had done so, is it to be supposed that he could have retained the friendship and reverence

of Horace, who, when the sixth book of the Æneid was fresh in the minds of Latin scholars, wrote these verses:

> Vetabo, qui Cereris sacrum
> Vulgarit arcanæ, sub iisdem
> Sit trabibus, fragilemque mecum
> Solvat phaselum?

On the other hand, is it likely that Horace would have written these lines, if he had retained his respect for Virgil in such untoward circumstances? "The detestation of the wretch who reveals the mysteries of Ceres, though expressed in general terms, must be applied by all Rome to the author of the sixth book of the Æneid. Can we seriously suppose that Horace would have branded with such wanton infamy one of the men in the world whom he loved and honored to the most? Nothing remains to say, except that Horace himself was ignorant of his friend's allegorical meaning; which the Bishop of Gloucester has since revealed to the world. It may be so; yet, for my own part, I should be very well satisfied with understanding Virgil no better than Horace did."

"It is from extrinsical circumstances," wrote the author in another place, "that we may expect the discovery of Virgil's allegory. Every one of these circumstances persuades me that Virgil described a real, not a mimic world, and that the scene lay in the infernal shades, and not in the temple of Ceres.

"The singularity of the Cumæan shores must be present to every traveler who has once seen them. To a superstitious mind, the thin crust, vast cavities, sulphurous steams, poisonous exhalations and fiery torrents may seem to trace out the narrow confine of the two worlds. The Lake Avernus was the chief object of religious horror; the black woods which

surrounded it when Virgil first came to Naples were perfectly suited to feed the superstition of the people. It was generally believed that this deadly flood was the entrance to hell, and an oracle was once established on its banks which pretended by magic rites to call up the departed spirits. Æneas, who revolved a more daring enterprise, addressed himself to the priestess of those dark regions. Their conversation may, perhaps, inform us whether an initiation or a real descent to the shades was the object of this enterprise. She endeavors to deter the hero, by setting before him all the dangers of his rash undertaking:

> Facilis descensus Averno;
> Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis:
> Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras
> Hoc opus, hic labor est.

"These particulars are absolutely irreconcilable with the idea of initiation, but perfectly agreeable to that of a real descent. That every step and every instant may lead us to the grave is a melancholy truth. The mysteries were only open at stated times, a few days at most, in the course of a year. The mimic descent of the mysteries was laborious and dangerous; the return light, easy and certain. In real death this order is inverted.

> Pauci quos æquus amavit
> Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad æthera virtus,
> Diis geniti, potuere.

These heroes, as we learn from the speech of Æneas, were Hercules, Orpheus, Castor and Pollux, Theseus and Pirithous. Of all these, antiquity believed that before their death they had seen the habitations of the dead; nor, indeed, will any of the circumstances tally with a supposed initiation. The adventure of Eurydice, the alternate life of the Brothers, and

the forcible intrusion of Alcides, Theseus and Pirithous, would mock the endeavors of the most subtle critic who should try to melt them down into his favorite mysteries. The exploits of Hercules, who triumphed over the king of terrors,

> Tartareum ille manu custodem in vincla petivit
> Ipsius a solio regis traxitque trementem,

was a wild imagination of the Greeks, but it was the duty of ancient poets to adopt and embellish these popular traditions; and it is the interest of every man of taste to acquiesce in their poetical fictions."

IX

These very natural and reasonable reflections upon the meaning of Virgil, and particularly the suggestions concerning the effect of the scenery about Cumæ, upon the mind of the traveller agree with the lines of Silius Italicus which were undoubtedly written under the inspiration of the Virgil-worship to which this poet was prone. The verses were handsomely translated by Addison:

> Averno next he showed his wond'ring guest,
> Averno now with milder virtues bless'd;
> Black with surrounding forests then it stood,
> That hung above and darkened all the flood:
> Clouds of unwholesome vapors rais'd on high,
> The fluttering bird entangled in the sky,
> Whilst all around the gloomy prospects spread
> An awful horror and religious dread.
> Hence to the borders of the marsh they go
> That mingles with the baleful streams below,
> And sometimes with a mighty yawn 'tis said,
> Opens a dismal passage to the dead,
> Who, pale with fear the rending earth survey

And startle at the sudden flash of day.
The dark Cimmerian grotto then he paints,
Describing all its old inhabitants,
That in the deep, infernal city dwell'd
And lay in everlasting night concealed.
Advancing still, the spacious fields he show'd
That with the smother'd heat of brimstone glow'd
Through frequent cracks the steaming sulphur broke,
Imprisoned fires in the close dungeons pent,
Roar to get loose, and struggle for a vent,
Eating their way and undermining all,
Till with a mighty burst whole mountains fall
Here, as 'tis said, the rebel giants lie
And when to move th' incumbent load they try
Ascending vapors on the day prevail,
The sun looks sickly and the skies grow pale.

To the practical mind of Addison there appeared a natural way of accounting for those antique wonders in the neighborhood of Posilippo which had been attributed to the magic of Virgil, without heeding either ancient or mediæval tradition. In his travels he wrote: "At about eight miles distance from Naples lies a very noble scene of antiquities. What they call Virgil's tomb is the first that one meets with on the way thither. It is certain that this poet was buried at Naples, but I think it is almost as certain that his tomb stood on the other side of the town which looks toward Vesuvius. By this tomb is the entrance into the grotto of Pausilypo. The common people of Naples believe it to have been wrought by magic, and that Virgil was the magician, who is in greater repute among the Neapolitans for having made the grotto than the Æneid. If a man would form himself a just idea of this place, he must fancy a vast rock undermined from one end to the other and a highway running through it near as long and

as broad as the Mall in the St. James's Park. This subterraneous passage is much mended since Seneca gave so bad a character to it. The entry at the both ends is higher than the middle parts of it, and sinks by degrees to fling in more light upon the rest. Towards the middle are two large funnels bored through the roof of the grotto to let in light and fresh air. There are nowhere about the mountains any vast heaps of stones, though it is certain the great quantities of them that are dug out of the rock could not easily conceal themselves had they not been consumed in the moles and buildings of Naples. This confirmed me in a conjecture which I made at a first sight of this subterraneous passage, that it was not at first designed so much for a highway as a stone quarry, but that the inhabitants, finding a double advantage by it, hewed it into the form we now see. Perhaps, the same design gave the original to the Sibyl's grotto, considering the prodigious multitude of palaces that stood in its neighborhood."

X

Beckford, the author of *Vathek*, though ignorant of everything beyond the nearest common-place of the Virgilian legend, showed plainly in his *Italy* that his imagination was affected by the little he knew. "At length," he wrote in November, 1780, "a bright gleam of sunshine summoned me to the broad terrace of Chiaja which commands the whole coast of Posilipo. Insensibly I drew towards it, and soon reached the entrance to the grotto, which lay in dark shades, whilst the crags that lower over it were brightly illuminated. Shrubs and vines grow luxuriantly in the crevices of the rock. To the right a grove of pines springs from the

highest pinnacles; on the left bay and chestnut conceal the tomb of Virgil, placed on the summit of a cliff which impends over the opening of the grotto, and is fringed with vegetation. Beneath are several wide apertures hollowed in the solid stone, which lead to caverns sixty or seventy feet in depth, where a number of peasants who were employed in quarrying made a strange but not absolutely unharmonious din with their tools and their voices. Walking out of the sunshine I seated myself on a loose stone immediately beneath the first gloomy arch of the grotto, and looking down the long and solemn perspective terminated by a speck of gray, uncertain light, venerated a work which some old chroniclers have imagined as ancient as the Trojan war. It was here the mysterious race of Cimmerians performed their infernal rites, and it was this excavation, perhaps, which led to their abode. The Neapolitans attribute a more modern, though full as problematical an origin to their famous cavern, and most piously believe it to have been formed by the enchantments of Virgil, who, as Addison very justly observes, is better known at Naples in his magical character than as the author of the Æneid. This strange infatuation most probably arose from the vicinity of the tomb in which his ashes are supposed to have been deposited; and which, according to popular tradition, was guarded by the same spirits who assisted in constructing the cave. But whatever may have given rise to these ideas, certain it is they were not confined to the lower ranks alone. King Robert (Mem. pour vie de Petrarque, Vol. I., p. 439) a wise though far from poetical monarch, conducted his friend Petrarch with great solemnity to the spot; and pointing to the entrance of the grotto very gravely asked him whether he did not adopt the general belief and conclude this stupendous

passage derived its origin from Virgil's powerful incantations? The answer, I think, may be easily conjectured. When I had sat for some time contemplating this dusky avenue, and trying to persuade myself that it was hewn by the Cimmerians, I retreated without proceeding any farther, and followed a narrow path which led me, after some windings and turnings, along the brink of the precipice, across a vineyard, to that retired nook of the rocks which shelters Virgil's tomb, most venerably mossed over and more than half concealed by brushes and vegetation. The clown who conducted me remained aloof at awful distance, whilst I sat commercing with the manes of my beloved poet, or straggled about the shrubbery which hangs directly above the mouth of the grot. . . . . Clambering high above the cavern, I hazarded my neck on the top of one of the pines. . . . . However, I descended alive, as Virgil's genii, I am resolved to believe, were my protectors."

With casual allusions not unlike these, the legends which gained their first literary form through the efforts of Englishmen faded gradually from the English imagination. But in the light of history the legends of Virgil, however absurd they may seem, are seen to be imbedded in the foundation of modern literature. If the complete history of fiction should ever be written, the author of it will find a knowledge of these legends indispensable.

XI

When the legends were dismissed from the field of general reading, they became a proper theme for the disquisitions of specialists in antiquarian study. The work of Naude,

already alluded to, was translated into English by Davies, and William Godwin mentioned Virgil in that verbose and shallow, but well printed book, *Lives of the Necromancers*. Von der Hagen, besides the remarks in his *Winter Letters* which have been quoted in these pages, discussed the topic more at length in the *Gesammtabenteuer*, treating it in the way of anecdote, rather than by philosophical inquiry. His greatest merit was the citation of a large number of books in which the legends were to be found. Francis Douce, in *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, recalled the tale of the pound of flesh in which Virgil's name figured, and gave some valuable bibliographical suggestions to William J. Thoms, who embodied them in the preface to his reprint of Doesborcke's *Virgilius*. The collection of which this was a part was transferred to the German by R. O. Spazier, who added to the *Virgilius* the metrical narrative of Aliprando. Thomas Wright in *Sorcery and Magic*, a book published both in England and America, presented a modernized and abbreviated version of the pseudo-biography, in order to supply necessary links in the history of mediæval black art. The impression produced by his work, however, is that of a miscellany rather than of a treatise with unity of purpose. The same is true of Massmann's review of the legends in the *Kaiserchronik*. But it was necessary that the material for the study should be gathered from all sides, and these authors performed the task.

Brief papers, by *Siebenhaar* on the fables which gathered about the name of Virgil, [*De fabulis quæ media ætate de Publio Virgilio Marone circumferebantur,*] by Schwubbe on the literary authority of Virgil in the middle ages, [*P. Virgilius per mediam ætatem gratia atque auctoritate florentissimus,*] by Piper on Virgil as a theologian and prophet, [*Virgilius als Theolog*

und Prophet des Heidenthums in der Kirche; Evangelische Kalender 1862,] by Creizenach on the Æneid, the fourth eclogue and the Pharsalia in mediæval times, [*Die Æneis, die vierte Ecloge und die Pharsalia im Mittelalter,*] by Michel on the changes which befel both Virgil and his poems in the middle ages, [*Quæ vices quæque mutationes et Virgilium ipsum et ejus carmina per mediam ætatem exceperint,*] by Genthe on the renown of Virgil as a poet and magician, [*Leben und Fortleben des Publius Virgilius Maro als Dichter und Zauberer,*] by Milberg in his *Memorabilia* and *Mirabilia* of Virgil, all attested the interest taken in the subject by men of letters in France and Germany, and pointed vaguely to the proper manner of dealing with it. Bibliographers like Sir Edgerton Brydges in the *Polyanthea* called attention to passages in this or that ancient writer in reference to the Virgilian tales which had escaped previous scrutiny, and Du Meril in his *Melanges* heaped up with little regard to order a mass of things indispensable to the study. Zappert in his *Fortleben*, of which free use has been made in these pages, reduced this confusion of learning, so far as it pertained to the literary and social aspect of Virgil's mediæval reputation, to a system which enjoyed the merit of possessing a beginning, a middle and an end, and if he had been as copious in the text as in the notes, would have left little to be desired. On the other hand Roth [*Ueber den Zauberer Virgilius* in Pfeiffer's *Germania*] wrought into shape the multitudinous reading of two or three generations respecting the magical renown of Virgil. He conceived this phase of Virgil's fame to be quite distinct from those that pertained to the historic development of character, or to the glamour of literary tradition, and would have it that the legends originated in the once prevalent craze for the collection of relics, a mania so

universal that the bones neither of saint nor sinner were safe from spoliation. He looked upon the anecdote related by John of Salisbury about a certain lunatic who wasted his money in the search for Virgil's remains as the corner stone of the whole fabric, and then examining the imposing narrative given by Gervase as to the finding not only of Maro's ashes, but also of his book on the *ars notoria*, maintained that the development of a single incident, historic in its first setting-forth, but highly mythical in the outcome, indicated the conditions under which all the rest of the tales arose. This theory is a plausible one and is supported by many analogies in folk-lore as well as in the more deliberate forms of literature. It was dismissed rather brusquely by Comparetti whose desire to include in a single work all that related to the mediæval fame of Virgil led him to reject views that did not agree with his imaginative philosophy, or yielded nothing to his truly exceptional genius for giving to the disjointed fragments of legend and tradition a vital correlation with history.

Comparetti divided his work into two parts. The first part, in sixteen chapters, treated of the position of Virgil in the classic world; of his precedence with the early Latin grammarians; of the marks of his general popularity in the times of the empire; of the sway which his works held in the schools of rhetoric; of the imitation by which the early Christian poets showed their knowledge of his works and those of other masters in Latin letters; of the centonists and commentators: of the allegorical interpretations of the Virgilian poems; of the survival in Christian times of post-classical methods of study and interpretation; of the growth of the belief in the poet as a prophet who foretold the coming of Christ and

the later applications of the doctrine that the Æneid was an elaborate allegory of human life; of grammatical study and of the attitude of Latin poetry in mediæval times toward Virgil; of the feeling of antiquity shown by the clergy; of the place assigned by them to Virgil; of his relation to the poets in the spoken languages; of Dante's intellectual character, of the limits of his classical learning, and of his relations to clericalism and to the renaissance; of his sympathy with Virgil in thought and in style; of the historic and symbolic reasons for the choice of Virgil as a guide through the Inferno in the place of Aristotle; of the respect in which the Virgil of Dante differed from the Virgil of tradition; of Virgil's relations to Christianity, as Dante understood them, and finally of the rise of the romantic and purely legendary idea of Virgil as shown in the *Dolopathos*.

In the second part the author took up the subject of Virgil in popular legend and discussed the relation of romance literature at its beginnings to the Virgil of literary tradition and to the prevalent impression of him as a wise man and a necromancer. He analyzed the reports of Conrad of Querfurt, Gervase of Tilbury and Alexander Neckam concerning works of magic done by Virgil in Naples; described the transfer of this legendary activity to Rome; sketched the growth of the tales, as shown in early French and German literature, and enlarged upon the alliance brought about between the Virgil of magical tradition and the prophetical Virgil revered in the church. Then he enumerated sporadic examples of tales of Virgilian magic incorporated into books that in general stood quite unrelated to the subject. The rise of the formal narrative of Virgilian magic was explained, the allusions of Italian literature to the subject collected and ranged in

orderly review and the book completed with the rare traces of the legends found in modern Italy.

In a voluminous appendix Comparetti presented the original text of the passages which related to the subject, from the works of Conrad, Gervase, Alexander; the romances, *L'Image du Monde*, *Cleomades*, *Renars Contrefait*, and *Vespasian*; the German verses of Jans Enenkel, Heinrich von Muglin, and the Italian of Bartolommeo Carracciolo, Antonio Pucci and Buonamente Aliprando. The French chap book *Les Faictz Merveilleux de Virgille* was reproduced in full, a valuable reprint for those who already have Thoms's *Early English Prose Romances*. To these was added the popular Italian poem *Pietro Barliario*, not so much for the light it cast on the history of the Virgilian legends as on account of its rarity and its importance in the study of Italian folk-lore.

The division made between literary tradition anterior to and including Dante, on the one hand, and romantic or legendary tradition, on the other, as a thing subsequent to Dante, by which he could not have been influenced, would seem an arbitrary distinction. In fact, to support it, Comparetti was forced to consider one or two important writings out of their chronological order and therefore out of their proper relation to the times in which they were written. Nevertheless his work is of the highest utility not only to students of Virgil, but to students of Dante. As to the work now in hand the author will be satisfied should he have widened the circle of Virgilian study. If he should be read and Comparetti quoted, it would be all that he could ask.

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